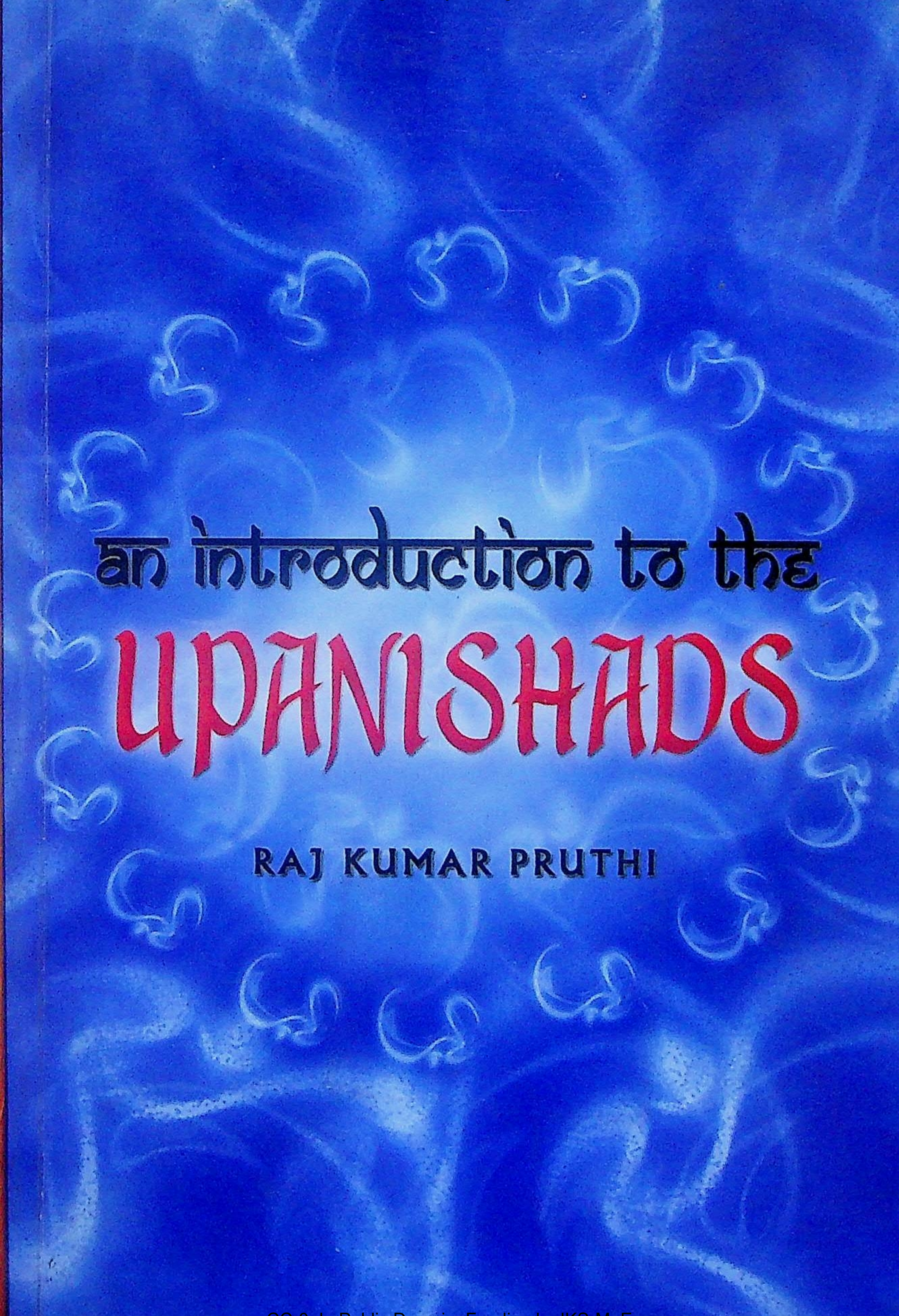

an introduction to the
UPANISHADS

RAJ KUMAR PRUTHI

An Introduction to the *Upanishads*

Ca No 11623.
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Raj Kumar Pruthi

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Preface

India has a rich cultural and spiritual heritage embodied in our ancient scriptures like the *Puranas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas;* but, ironically, most of us in the present generation are not conversant with the primal sacred writings of our ancient ancestors. With that fact in mind, and with the intention of introducing the present-day generation to our rich historical past, I undertook the task of writing a book on our ancient scriptures.

The aim of this work on the *Upanishads* is to introduce the readers to India's spiritual heritage which is of indeterminable antiquity.

Attempt has been made to examine the origin and development of the *Upanishads* in proper perspectives. It is difficult to determine the number of the *Upanishads;* however, separate chapters have been devoted to some of the principal *Upanishads*. Effort has also been made to describe the teachings and their relevance in our modern times.

A comprehensive glossary has been appended to make the book reader-friendly.

Raj Kumar Pruthi

Introduction

The *Upanishads* collectively are known as the *Vedanta*. The Upanishadic philosophy evolved over a period of time. Many seers and self-realized souls contributed towards its development. This resulted in complexity and veracity of thought for which they are well known.

There is no definite opinion as to the number of *Upanishads*. It is believed that there are 108 principal *Upanishads*. But the classical *Upanishads* are known to be ten or twelve in number.

They deal with various subjects as follows:

1. The nature of the Brahman
2. The ideal human conduct
3. The practice of *yoga*
4. The nature of *atman*
5. Creation of man
6. The nature of reality
7. The nature of true knowledge
8. Knowledge and ignorance
9. The nature of consciousness
10. The concept of *karma*
12. Incarnation of soul, etc.

The *Upanishads* are the greatest contribution of India to the world heritage. They play a significant role in the evolution of the ancient Indian thought. Even a cursory study of the *Upanishads* is bound to change our thinking and our way of living, thereby saving us from the catastrophe we are heading for.

A report of the WTO (World Trade Organisation) reveals that by the year 2010, sixty per cent of Indians will suffer from heart problems. A general remedy is change in food habits and lifestyle. Stress and insecurity at the personal level, crime and violence at the social level and ecological degradation are some adverse side effects of economic growth, fuelled by science and technology.

The need of the day is to harmonise modern thinking with spiritual essence. This requires a new paradigm, and that is, India's spiritual heritage of the *Upanishads*.

No wonder Schopenhauer remarked:

"In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life—it will be the solace of my death".

The goal as well as the way has been pointed out to us by the *Upanishads*. The well-being of the modern man depends on a proper understanding of the *Upanishadic* teachings and on their sincere application to the practical problems of our daily life.

Thus only can materialism, which is the common enemy of the world, be conquered, and love, instead of hate, because our guiding principle in accordance with the teachings of the *Upanishads*.

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Chapter One

The *Upanishads*, Meaning, Importance, Origin and Ideal

'Upanishads' means 'inner or mystic teaching'. The term Upanishad is derived from *upa* (near), *ni* (down) and *s(h)ad* (to sit), i.e., 'sitting down near'. Groups of pupils sit near the teacher to learn from him the secret doctrine. In the quietude of the forest hermitages, the *Upanishad* thinkers pondered on the problems of deepest concerns and communicated their knowledge to deserving pupils near them.

Samkara derives the word *Upanishad* as a substitute from the root *sad*, meaning 'to loosen', 'to reach' or 'to destroy', with *upa* and *ni* as prefixes and *kvip* as termination.

If this determination is accepted, *Upanishad* means brahma-knowledge by which ignorance is loosened or destroyed. The treatises that deal with brahma-knowledge are called the *Upanishads*.

The different derivations together make out that the *Upanishads* give us both spiritual vision and philosophical argument. There is a core of certainty which is essentially incommunicable except by a way of life. It is strictly by personal effort that one can reach the truth.

The *Upanishads* more clearly set forth the prime Vedic doctrines like self-realization, yoga and meditation, *karma* and reincarnation, which were hidden or kept veiled under the symbols of the older mystery i.e. religion.

The older *Upanishads* were usually affixed to a particular *Veda*, through a Brahmana or Aranyaka. The *Upanishads* became prevalent some centuries before the time of Krishna and Buddha.

The main figure in the *Upanishads*, though not present in many of them, is the sage Yajnavalkya. Most of the great teachings of later Hindu and Buddhist philosophy derive from him. He taught the great doctrine of '*neti-neti*', the view that truth can be found only through the negation of all thoughts about it.

Other important Upanishadic sages are Uddalaka Aruni, Shwetaketu, Shandilya, Aitareya, Pippalada, Sanat Kumara. The names of early Vedic teachers like Manu, Brihaspati, Ayasya and Narada are also found in the *Upanishads*.

In the *Upanishads*, the spiritual meanings of the Vedic texts are brought out and emphasized in their own right.

Importance

There is no book in the whole world that is so thrilling, soul stirring and inspiring as the *Upanishads*. The philosophy taught by the *Upanishads* has been the source of solace for many, both in the East and the West. The human intellect has not been able to conceive of anything more noble and sublime in the history of the world than the teachings of the *Upanishads*.

The *Upanishads* contain the essence of the *Vedas*. They are the concluding portions of the *Vedas* and are the source of the Vedanta philosophy. Profound, original, lofty and sublime thoughts arise from every verse. They contain the direct spiritual experiences or revelations of seers, or sages, also called the *rishis*. They are the products of the highest wisdom and supreme divine knowledge. Hence they stir the hearts of people and inspire them.

The glory or grandeur of the *Upanishads* cannot be adequately described in words, because words are finite and language is imperfect. Millions of aspirants have drawn inspiration and guidance from the *Upanishads*. They are the cream of the *Vedas*. They are treasures of incalculable value. They are rich in profound philosophical thought. There is immense depth of meaning in their passages and verses. The language is beautiful.

The *Upanishads* give a vivid description of the nature of the *atman*, the supreme soul, in a variety of ways, and expound suitable methods and aids to attain the immortal *brahman*, the highest *purusha*.

Schopenhauer, the renowned philosopher of the West, had always a book of the *Upanishads* on his table, and was in the habit, before going to bed, of performing his devotions from its pages.

The *Upanishads* have undoubtedly exercised and will continue to exercise a considerable influence on the religion and philosophy of India. They present a view of reality which would certainly satisfy the scientific, the philosophic, as well as the religious aspirations of man.

Origin

The *Upanishads* are metaphysical treatises which are replete with sublime conceptions of the *Vedanta* and with intuitions of universal truths.

The Indian *rishis* and seers of yore endeavoured to grasp the fundamental truths of being. They tried to solve the problems of the origin, the nature and the destiny of man and of the universe. They attempted to grasp the meaning and the value of knowing and being. They endeavoured to find a solution for the problems of the means of life and the world and of the relation of the individual to the 'unseen,' or the supreme soul.

They sought earnestly satisfactory solution of these profound questions: Who am I? What is this universe or *samsara*? Whence were we born? On what do we rest? Where do we go? Is there any such thing as immortality, freedom, perfection, eternal bliss, everlasting peace, *atman, Brahman,* which is birthless, deathless, changeless, self-existent? How to attain *brahman* or immortality?

They practised right living, *tapas,* introspection, self-analysis, enquiry and meditation on the pure, inner self and attained self-realisation.

Their intuitions of deep truths are subtle and direct. Their inner experiences, which are direct, first-hand, intuitive and mystical, which no science can impeach, which all philosophies declare as the ultimate goal of their endeavours, are embodied in the sublime books called the *Upanishads*.

Some Western scholars have fixed the age of the *Upanishads* as 600 BC, or so. They regard that all of them belong to the pre-Buddhistic period. But this is a wrong statement. The *Upanishads* are the knowledge portion, or *jnana-khanda,* of the *Vedas*. They are eternal. They came out of the mouth of Hiranyagarbha, or Brahman.

The *Upanishads* are a source of deep mystic divine knowledge which serves as the means of freedom from this formidable *samsara,* earthly bondage. They are world-scriptures. They appeal to the lovers of truth in all races, and at all times. They contain profound secrets of the *Vedanta*, or *Jnana-Yoga*, and practical hints and clues which throw much light on the pathway of self-realisation.

There are four *Vedas*, viz., *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*. There are as many *Upanishads* to each *Veda* as there are *Sakhas* or branches (subdivisions). There are 21, 109, 1000, and 50 subdivisions to the *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama*, and *Atharva Vedas* respectively. Thus, there are one thousand one hundred and eighty (1,180) *Upanishads*.

Ideal

Knowledge of the *Upanishads* destroys ignorance, the seed of *samsara*. By having knowledge of the *Upanishads* can one attain self-realisation. Knowledge of *brahman* is called *Upanishad*, because it leads to *brahman* and helps aspirants to attain *brahman*.

The following two ideas dominate the teaching of all the *Upanishads*.

1. Final emancipation can be attained only by knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, or *Brahman* (*Brahmajnana*).
2. He who is equipped with the four means of salvation, viz., *viveka* (discrimination), *vairagya* (dispassion), *shad-sampat* (the six-fold treasure; self-control, etc.) and *mumukshutva* (yearning for liberation), can attain *Brahman*. The *Upanishads* teach the philosophy of absolute unity.

The goal of men, according to the *Upanishads*, is realisation of *brahman*. Self-realisation alone can dispel ignorance and bestow immortality, eternal bliss, and everlasting peace. Knowledge of *brahman* alone can remove all sorrows, delusion and pain.

The *Upanishads* are rightly called the *Vedanta,* the end of the *Vedas,* that which is reserved for those who have freed themselves from the bonds of formal religion.

The *Upanishads* are not meant for the masses, as they contain the highest speculations of philosophy. They are meant only for the select few, who are fit and worthy to receive the instructions. Hence the term 'Upanishad' signified at first 'secret teaching' or 'secret doctrine'.

Sadhana-Chatushtaya (the four-fold means) is the primary qualification of an aspirant of *Jnana-Yoga,* or one who seeks the knowledge of the *Upanishads.*

Study the *Upanishads* systematically.

1. Acquire the four means of salvation.
2. Meditate on the non-dual *atman* or *brahman.*
3. Attain ever-lasting bliss!

Chapter Two

The System of the *Upanishads*

By a system we understand an association of thoughts, which collectively belong to and are dependent on a single centre. A system has therefore always an individual author, whether he himself originated the thoughts brought together in the system, or has only adjusted to one another and welded into a consistent whole imperfect thoughts derived from without.

In this sense a 'system of the *Upanishads*,' strictly speaking, does not exist. For these treatises are not the work of a single genius, but the total philosophical product of an entire epoch, which extends according to some scholars from the period of the wandering in the Ganges valley to the rise of Buddhism, or approximately from 1000 or 800 B.C. to c. 500 B.C., but which is in its offshoots far beyond this last limit of time.

Thus we find in the *Upanishads* a great variety of conceptions which are developed before our eyes, and which not seldom stand to one another in irreconcilable contradiction. All these conceptions, however, gather so entirely around one common centre, and are dominated so completely by the one thought of the sole reality of the *atman*, that they all present themselves as manifold variations upon one and the same theme, which is treated at one time more briefly, or again at greater length, now from the starting-point of the empirical consciousness, and now in abrupt contradiction thereto.

Accordingly all individual differences are so entirely overshadowed by the one fundamental conception, that while it is true that we have before us in the *Upanishads* no defined system, we are able, nevertheless, to trace the gradual development of a system. This latter then consists in the increasingly thorough interweaving of a fundamental thought originally idealistic with the realistic requirements of the empirical consciousness, which make their influence felt more and more. That this is so will appear in the course of our exposition.

These tendencies reached their climax first in post-Vedic times in the general system at once theological and philosophical, which was shaped by the hands of Bâdarâyana and his commentator Sankara, and in which full account was taken of the demands both of idealism and realism (by distinguishing between a higher and a lower knowledge).

As the system of the *Vedanta,* this became in India the universal foundation of faith and knowledge, and has remained so up to the present day, though undergoing great development on every side. It falls naturally into four main divisions, as follows:

1. Theology: The doctrine of *brahman* as the first principle of all things.
2. Cosmology: The doctrine of the evolution of this principle to form the universe.
3. Psychology: The doctrine of the entrance of *brahman* as soul into the universe evolved from him.
4. Eschatology and Ethics: The doctrine of the fate of the soul after death, and the manner of life which is therefore required.

The growth also of the system of the *Vedanta,* as it is disclosed to us in the *Upanishads,* may with similar propriety, be discussed under these four principal heads, and the subdivisions which the nature of the subject suggests.

We propose to endeavour to collect under each heading all the relevant passages of the *Upanishads* recognized by the later *Vedanta* and where a development of thought presents itself in them we shall in many instances be furnished with a safer ground for determining the chronological position of a text as compared with earlier and later treatments of the same theme.

The gain for philology therefore will consist in the provision of a more secure basis for the chronology of the *Upanishad* texts according to their relative age; while on the philosophical side, we may hope for a deeper insight into the rise of one of the most remarkable and prolific creations of thought that the world possesses.

Chapter Three

Aitareya Upanishad

The *Aitareya Upanishad* belongs to the *Rig Veda* and the *Upanishad* proper consists of three chapters. This is part of the part of the *Aitareya Aranyaka*, and the *Upanishad* begins with the fourth chapter of the second *Aranyaka*, and comprises Chapter IV, V and VI.

The preceding parts deal with sacrificial ceremonies like *mahavrata* and their interpretations. It is the purpose of this *Upanishad* to lead the mind of the sacrificer away from the outer ceremonial to its inner meaning. All true sacrifice is inward.

Sankara points out that there are three classes of men who wish to acquire wisdom. The highest consists of those who have turned away from the world, whose minds are free and collected, who are eager for freedom. For them the *Upanishad* (*Aitareya Aranyaka* II, 4-6) is intended.

There are others who wish to become free gradually by attaining to the world of *Hiranyagarbha*. For them the knowledge and worship of the *prana*, life-breath is intended (*Aitareya Aranyaka* II, 1-3).

There are still others who care only for worldly possessions. For them the meditative worship of *Samhita* is intended. (*Aitareya Aranyaka* III).

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the second part of the *Aitereya Aranyaka* of the *Rig Veda* constitute the *Aitereyopanishad*. The knowledge of self-realization is the main subject covered in these chapters.

Peace Invocation

Vaang Mei Mansi Pratishthita Mano Mei
Vachi Pratishthitmaviravirm Eidhi | |
Vedasya Ma Aanistha Shrutam
Mei Ma Prahasiranenadhitenahoraatraan
Sanddhamriyatum Vadishyami Satyam Vadishyami | |

Om! May my speech be based on (i.e. accord with) the mind; may my mind be based on speech. O Self-effulgent One, reveal Thyself to me. May you both (speech and mind) be the carriers of the *Veda* to me. May not all that I have heard depart from me. I shall join together (i.e. obliterate the difference of) day and night through this study. I shall utter what is verbally true; I shall utter what is mentally true. May that (*brahman*) protect me; may That protect the speaker (i.e. the teacher); may That protect me; may That protect the speaker, may That protect the speaker.

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

The Resolution of God to Create the Universe

Before the existence of this universe, there was nothing but God. There were no expressions and hence no forms. It is at this moment that God thought of creating different creatures that would bear the fruit of their actions.

Thinking of this, God created the universe comprising fourteen worlds. Afterwards, He thought to create caretakers to protect these worlds from alien influences. Accordingly, he created the *Hiranyamaya Purush* from the four elements, embellished him with all the organs and sub-organs and infused life into him. Thus he created Brahma who in turn created the caretakers of the worlds.

To create the different organs and sub-organs of *Hiranyagarbha*, the supreme god had to practise penance, that is, take a resolution and as a result, the mouth developed. From the mouth the tongue was created and from the tongue, speech, senses and *agni* or fire took birth. After this the nose developed and *prana* (breath) was created in it. The *prana vayu* created the *Vayu devta*.

After this the two eyes gradually started developing and the corresponding god also took birth from it. In this way the ear, skin, heart, navel came into existence and corresponding deities were also formed.

The Creation of Human Beings

The deities like Agni which corresponded with the different senses created by God came into existence. At that time God infused hunger and thirst into them. Hence the deities prayed to the divine cosmic soul—'O Lord! Please arrange or create such a place staying where we will have food.'

Answering their prayer, the Divine Cosmic Spirit created the cow and showed it to all of them, asking them to reside in its body. But the dieties doubted that the cow would suffice for all of them. So, the Cosmic Spirit created the horse and showed it to them. Looking at this, the deities were yet dissatisfied. Ultimately, God (divine spirit) created the human body seeing which all the deities were elated. They said: 'This human body is a unique place for all of us to stay and all our requirement will be satisfied in totality'.

The Divine Cosmic Spirit told the gods to take their appropriate positions in the human body.

Immediately Agni assumed form of speech, the senses and entered the human mouth. Therefore, he resided in the tongue. Similarly, the Sun, the Ashwinis, Varuna, Moon, Death all in the form of corresponding senses established themselves in their concerned places in the human body. Only Hunger and Thirst remained. Both said to the supreme God—'O Lord! Please decide the place where we can also stay'.

The Divine Cosmic Spirit replied: 'Both of you do not need independent places. I shall allot you places with the other gods. I shall make you partners in the food partaken. When the gods enjoy pleasures for their contention, they simultaneously satisfy hunger and thirst'.

The Creation of Material Objects

For sustenance of all the senses and after the creation of all the gods, the Cosmic Spirit created food and also created consumable articles by heating the five elements for the gods. At that time Food thought: 'He who eats me is my destroyer' and so he started running away where he could neither be caught by speech nor by the senses. At the end, Food tried to enter the mouth along with *Apaan Vayu* upon which the *purush* could partake the food in his body. This proves the fact that *prana* is itself the life of a human being.

The Entry of God in the Human Body

When all the senses and material objects were created, the Cosmic Spirit thought that these senses would never work without Him. Therefore, the supreme god entered the human body through a small aperture *brahmarandhra* in the head, and came to stay in the heart. Since then He has been staying there. Thus, to attain the god, one does not have to wander in places like the super celestial region as the pure sky and the entire universe. One can attain God right in his heart.

Presumption of God in Material Life

Seeing the strange creation of materials, human being started to think about this creator. He realized that the Divine Cosmic Spirit that resides in his heart is the one who is all-pervasive and is the creator of one and all. When the divine element was created in the human body, the *purush* realized him. Hence, God is referred to as *Idandra* which means 'I have seen him'. This is referred to by the people indirectly as 'Indra'.

The Evolution of the Human Body

All these individual unredeemed souls are present in the father's body as semen. This semen is the quintessence of the human body. The father takes care of all this in his own body and then places a seed in the womb of the woman. The woman nourishes that seed in the form of a foetus just like a part of her own body and protects it properly.

Until delivery, she takes every care of the foetus which ultimately takes birth as the child. The mother then makes every effort through different ceremonies to make the child strong, pure and intelligent. In this way, this is the second birth of the child. When the child becomes fit to work and earn himself, the father makes the child his representative. He entrusts him with the responsibility of all the auspicious duties and ceremonies such as Agni Hotra, supplication to God, hospitality of guests, etc. and eventually considers him free from the *Pitra Rina* (the duty towards the ancestors). Slowly, the father grows old and dies. After death, he again takes birth according to his *karmas*. This is his third birth. In this way, the transmigration of souls continues endlessly.

An Example of the Divine Experience of Vamadeva

An individual soul transmigrates from one birth to another and is caught in an endless cycle. But he who realizes the eternal truth does not take birth again. It is believed that Vamadeva acquired the ultimate knowledge when he was there in his mother's womb. There he said, 'How lucky I am to have realized the gods in form of senses. Until I was devoid of this knowledge, I was locked in these bodies which were like cages. Now, like a bird and with the energy of knowledge in my wings, I have broken all these bonds and have become separate.' When Vamadeva Rishi took birth and when he attained god-hood, he freed himself from all desires and attained immortality.

What is Worth Knowing?

The two *atmans* (souls) which have been referred to are the ones who created this universe and created the unredeemed individual soul. He assumed a place in the body to assist the soul just created.

People who wanted to realize God started discussing things like: Who is that soul to whom we supplicate and propitiate?

They thought that the heart is the mind because their energies are tangible and palpable. This is all embellished by the power to command, judge, understand, experience, having patience, taking resolution, desire, maintain breath, fulfilment of sexual desires, etc. All this is the embodiment of the Almighty, the Divine Cosmic Spirit. Thus, we can feel the all-pervasiveness of this cosmic spirit.

God is Most Venerable

The Divine Cosmic Spirit, who has created us, who gives us energy to perform our duties and who protects all of us, is the most venerable. Swami Prajapati is the one who has created all the subjects and the people. All these gods in the form of senses, the five elements, all small creatures, taking birth from eggs, from sweat, from earth, from the womb and other animals like cows, horses, elephants, all of them assume energy to perform their duties as a result of the blessings of the Divine Cosmic Spirit. All these creatures reside in Him. He is the only being from which everything takes birth.

The Fruits of Supplicating to the Divine Spirit

He who realizes God or the Divine Cosmic Spirit transcends all worldly things and resides eternally in the super-celestial region where he enjoys eternal happiness and attains immortality.

Chapter Four

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* which is generally recognized to be the most important of the *Upanishads* forms part of the *Satapatha Brahmana*. It consists of three *kandas* or sections,

The *Madhu Kanda* expounds the teachings of the basic identity of the individual and the Universal self. The *Yajnavalkya* or the *Muni Kanda* provides the philosophical justification of the teaching of *Khila Kanda,* which deals with certain modes of worship and meditation, *upasana,* answering roughly to the three stages of religious life, *sravana,* hearing *upadesha* or teaching, *manana,* logical reflection, *upapatti* and *nididhyasana* or contemplative meditation.

Of the two recensions of the *Satapatha Brahmana,* the Kanva and Madhyandina, Sankara follows the former.

Introduction

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is an integral part of the *Vajaseneya Brahmana* of the Kanva branch of the *Yajurveda*. This *Upanishad* is the biggest among all the *Upanishads* and hence its name *Brihat*. As it is worth reading in the forest (*aranya*), it is known as *Aranyaka*. Along with its huge size, the comprehensiveness of the meanings is also noticeable. The knowledge of self-realization is the theme of this *Upanishad* comprising of six chapters.

Once upon a time, the gods decided to defeat the *asuras* by *Udgeetha. Udgeetha* is a segment of the *karma* performed during a religious sacrifice. They decided to suppress all the evil impulses with the aid of *Udgeetha*. They told the proud gods of the speech, nose, ears, eyes and skin to sing praises. Every god, through his action, sang the praises so as to enhance the strength of goodness but they were selfish. They wanted to enjoy immediately the fruits of what they had done.

This selfishness itself is an evil or demonic quality. That is why their work went in vain. At the end, the prime *prana* was told to perform this *karma*. On this, *prana* started contemplating. *Prana* itself does not enjoy any material pleasures and it is his blessings that the senses enjoy the pleasures. All the other senses are awake at times and asleep at others, but the *prana* is always awake. When *prana* was praised, the demons were defeated and the gods came out victorious.

We construe from this story that the root of all evil deeds and thoughts lie in selfishness. Till the *jiva* is attached and locked in the shackles of evil, he cannot be liberated from this vicious cycle of misery. The persons who surrender all attachments cannot be affected by any temptation.

The second chapter begins with the conversation between Drupta Gargya and Ajaatashatru, the emperor of Kashi. Ajaatashatru was a great thinker and philosopher, while Drupta Gargya was self-conceited. When he said to Ajaatashatru, 'I will give the knowledge of the divine cosmic spirit', Ajaatashatru immediately gave him one thousand gold coins.

This Shruti thus proves the fact that the king was indeed a noble soul, he would not see others' weaknesses and shortcomings, rather he would respect one and all.

Along with this, the greatness of the cosmic divine knowledge is also enumerated.

After this whoever (who had pride on the Aditya) was taught divine knowledge by Gargya was proclaimed as non-venerable. Ajaatashatru even went to the extent of stating the benefits of their propitiation.

As a result of this, Gargya was confused and his ego ceased to exist. At last he sought the refuge of the king so that he could understand the divine cosmic spirit. Listening to this, the king, holding his hand took him to his palace to a sleeping person and called out to Moon who was self-conceited because of *prana*, by different names i.e. Brihat, Pandakhaasa, Soma, Rajan, etc.

Despite this, the sleeping person did not get up. The king went near him and pressed his hand. As soon as this happened, the person woke up.

Through this incident, the Shruti proves that all the gods, who are proud of their name and beauty, are not in reality the Vignamaya souls. The Vignamaya souls are devoid of name and form. The divine god is omnipresent the supreme god resides in the heart of each and every creature.

He is the real inspirer. The other gods who are proud of their senses are expressions of Divine God. Without His reign, all their independent energies are useless and futile. Because they control the senses, they are *prana* (breath) but the divine soul, because He is the controller and inspirer of the *prana*, is *prana* of the *pranas* i.e. *mahaprana*.

In the fourth *Brahmana* of this chapter itself is the conversation of Yagyavalkya and Maitreyi. Yagyavalkya had two wives—Maitreyi and Katyayani. Amongst them, Maitreyi had realized the divine cosmic spirit while Katyayani was a woman with ordinary intellect. When Yagyavalkya decided to renounce the world, he decided to divide the property between his two wives. On this, Katyayani did not say anything as she was desirous only of physical or material pleasures. Maitreyi commented—'If this entire earth filled with wealth and riches become mine, shall I become immortal?' Listening to this, Yagyavalkya replied, "One cannot expect to attain immortality by wealth. But one can enjoy all the physical pleasures like a desirous person.' Maitreyi became all the more curious and she asked, "What shall I do by taking that which cannot make me immortal? Tell me something by which I will become immortal."

In reality, this is the real form of detachment and judgement. He who does not see the birth of these aforesaid things within himself cannot realize God. Seeing the curiosity of Maitreyi, Yagyavalkya gave her the sermon of the Divine Cosmic Spirit. He told her that the soul and the cosmic spirit are in reality one and self-realization is a way to realize this entire world. It is defeat to see anything or realize anything other than the soul. All human being take birth from that cosmic soul and that all creatures devoid of the realization of that soul reside in final dissolution and ignorance. In this way, everything is pervaded by the divine cosmic soul. For such a person, everything is devoid of the doer, the act and the effect. It is not easy to realize the element of the divine soul as the divine cosmic soul is omniscient.

After this comes the *Madhubrahmana*. The nectar is the essence of many types of flowers. The flower is the benefactor and the nectar is the beneficent. This relation of the benefactor and the beneficent is referred as *Madhu* in this *Brahmana*. It is opined that all the things/elements, i.e. earth, water, fire, air, space, moon, lightning and directions are the motives of the four elements and the humans or creatures created are emerged from these four elements. But this is the practical viewpoint. In reality, all these four elements reside in and are protected by the Divine Cosmic Soul. This is the real and divine. In this way, the *Madhubrahmana* speaks of the all pervasive nature of the divine cosmic soul and that each and every atom of this universe contains that divine cosmic element.

Indro Maayabhihi Puru Rupa Eeyatey

This Shruti states that it is that divine energy who, with the aid of the *Mayashakti* (divine play of delusion) assumes all forms.

The second chapter following the *Madhu Kanda* is the *Yagyavalkya Kanda*.

The chapter begins with the narration of king Janak who performed a religious *yagya* and gave plenty of money in *dakshina*. All the scholars, Brahmins of the Panchal region were present on the occasion. The king proclaimed: "The scholar who is the most intelligent and has realized *brahma*, can take from my cowshed ten thousand cows on each of whose horns twenty gold coins are tied." There was not even one scholar who had the courage to come before the king and assertively state that he was the most noble and greatest scholar. At that time, Yagyavalkya got up and told his Brahmacharis to take away all the ten thousand cows. Seeing this, all the Brahmins present were unnerved. One of them asked: 'Do you think you are the greatest scholar to have realized the supreme god?'

Yagyavalkya's reply was indeed of a sublime noble soul. He replied, "We respect that person who is incessantly meditating upon the *brahma* but we are desirous of the cows'. After this, all the Brahmins present asked one question each of Yagyavalkya and were satisfied with the answers.

In the end, Gargi asked him what is the cause for the evolution of the different Lokas (worlds). When she asked the cause of the evolution of the Brahmaloka, Yagyavalkya stopped her. He told her: 'The Brahmaloka and its evolution is devoid of doubt and to question its evolution itself is a crime.' Therefore he refuted and repudiated the question.

After this Yagyavalkya himself asked a question to the Brahmins present. No one could dare to answer that question.

The first *brahmana* of the fourth chapter comprises of the conversation between Janak and Yagyavalkya. Janak had heard from different sources that the speech, *prana*, the eyes, etc. are basically embodiments of Brahma. Yagyavalkya asked Janak about the purview and the greatness of these embodiments. He also told him how each of them can be propitiated and the attainment of the *deva loka*. Listening to this Janak considered these things as the greatest attainments and decided to give one thousand cows to Yagyavalkya. But Yagyavalkya told him that taking wealth from a disciple who is not satisfied was against his father's principles and refused to accept *dakshina* (gifts/fees).

In the second *Brahmana*, considering Janak as the authority, Yagyavalkya narrated to him the gigantic form of that cosmic soul that is all-pervasive and immovable. At this, King Janak was thoroughly satisfied and he surrendered all the riches and wealth at the feet of Yagyavalkya.

The third and the fourth *Brahmanas* of the fourth chapter speak of the conversation between Janak and

Yagyavalkya. Although Yagyavalkya had taken a resolution that he would not say anything to Janak', he had agreed to answer all the questions Janak asked. That is why he asked, "Whose effulgence is the cause of *purush's* radiance?"

This incepts the debate and conversation between the two which assumes a comprehensive form and is explained and narrated in both the *Brahmanas*. Finally, both come to a conclusion that *atman* (soul) is the sublime radiance or flame that is enkindled. They themselves are light. He can see these things in the dream state. Although he is desirous of enjoying everything, he is absolutely detached and isolated. In the state of *Sushupti*, the material world ceases to exist and finally he goes and resides in the *Anandmaya swaroop* (a form embellished with divine happiness). As he is the vision of the person seeing, breath of the person breathing, taste of the person tasting, the speech of the person speaking, the sound of the person listening, the intelligence of the intellectual and the realization of the person striving to realize, he is devoid of any shortcoming as the real form of whatever is there is the *atman* (soul) itself. Therefore, whatever we listen or speak is the expression of the divine cosmic soul. So, that divine cosmic soul who is inpercievable is all pervasive.

He who realizes this become selfless and *Aaptakama*. The soul does not undergo transmigration. The soul is nothing but the divine cosmic soul and eventually the soul becomes one after merging with the divine cosmic spirit.

After this the fifth *Brahmana* speaks of the conversation between Maitreyi and Yagyavalkya. The sixth *Brahmana* speaks of the tradition and lineage of the principal teachers and with that the *Madhukanda* ends.

The fifth *Brahmana* of the *Upanishad* begins with the *Khilakanda*. Different types of propitiation are mentioned here. There is also a very interesting story in the beginning. The son of Prajapati, the gods, humans and the demons celibate while staying at their father's place and request Prajapati to give them a sermon. Prajapati pronounces the word *Da* thrice and this syllable *Da* encompasses the sermon to be given. The gods who are desirous assume the meaning to be *daman* (suppression)—suppression of the senses, control or restraint. The cruel *asuras* assume the meaning *daya* or pity towards all creatures. Humans who desire wealth assume the meaning to be *daan* or 'donation'.

In this way, according to their nature, all of them were satisfied and contented.

Other than this, many types of propitiation are also explained. The first *Brahmana* of the sixth chapter narrates the acrimonious debate of the senses amongst themselves. At the end, they realize that *prana* is the noblest of them. The second *Brahmana* speaks of the conversation between Shwetaketu and Pravahana. Shwetaketu assumed himself to be a scholar nearly studying all the texts. To display his knowledge he came to the court of Pravahana, the king of Panchal. The king realized that he was proud and asked him five questions which were related to the concept of life and death. Shwetaketu could not answer even one of them properly. He sought the help of his father, Guru Aruni who also failed to find an answer to the questions put by the king. Both father and son went to Pravahana and asked him about the answer. Pravahana gave them the sermon of *Panchagni Vidya*.

After this, the third and fourth *Brahmana* of the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad* opines the concept of

Shrimanth and Putramantha actions. Both these *karmas* are interrelated. This speaks of the methods of begetting a good progeny. The fifth *Brahmana* of the Khilakanda speaks of the lineage and tradition of the principal teachers.

Invocation to Peace

Aum purna madaha Purna Idam
Purnatpurnam Udachyate
Purnasya Purna maadaaya
Shishyatey |
Shishyatey |

Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

The first chapter of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* comprises of six *Brahmanas*. It speaks of the presence of time in the body of the horse. Next comes the *Ashwamedha* and its glory along with the positioning of the planets, etc. Emergence of the *Ashwamedha Agni* and of the gigantic form of *Agni* from water as well as the resolution of Prajapati to perform the religious sacrifice and death has been represented as the one who enjoys the material happiness.

The Form of Propitiation of Ashwamedha

Prajapati expressed a desire that anybody may be a religious sacrifice. "May I, the one embellished with the soul be embellished with a body" and saying this he entered it. As a result of estrangement, the body assumed the shape of a horse and got bloated. Therefore, Prajapati is literally referred to as a horse and he is praised in a similar way. When he entered, he was devoid of perseverence and conviction and was impregnable but finally became pregnable. This is the quality or the merit of the *Ashwamedha Yagya*.

Thus, *Ashwamedha* represents Prajapati himself and is praised in a similar fashion. Prajapati contemplated on the *Ashwa* (horse) while putting the reins on the horse. In this way, he kept the horse for himself considering himself, to be the god of the horse and sent the other animals to the other gods.

Thus, all the people who perform religious rites acquire the Prajapatya animal (accepted by all the gods) through mantras and recitation of incantations.

The Benefits of the Propitiation of *Ashwamedha*

Here we are told of the fruits or benefits of the propitiation of the *Ashwamedha*. It is the sun which is radiant and gives light to the entire universe. The benefit in the form of the sun's years is the body itself.

Both Agni and Aditya are basically *Arka* and *Ashwamedha*, but both these forms of deaths are in one and only one form of God. A person who realizes this conquers death and becomes immortal. Death becomes a part of his soul.

The Method of Name Recitation for Propitiation of *Prana*

The third *Brahmana* of the first chapter speaks about the strife between the gods and the *asuras* and thoughts related to Udgeetha are analyzed in depth. Amongst all the senses, the greatness of *prana* is explained in detail. A person who propitiates the *prana* transcends death. The concluding chapter speaks of the methods of name recitation. A person who realizes the glory of the *prana* should recite the *Saama*, i.e. one should recite all these three mantras.

Asto Ma Sadgamya। Tamaso Maa Jyotrigamaya। Mrityorma Amritam Gamaya।

Lead me from *asat* (evil) towards *sat* (good), lead me from darkness towards light, and lead me from death towards immortality.

In this way, the *Sadhaka*, who propitiates the *prana* contemplates on the mantras and merges into *prana*. He asks whatever he desires. The Udgeetha realizes the *prana*, and like the *prana* he is successful in accomplishing all his desires. In this way, propitiation of the *prana* helps us beget all the material pleasures.

The Evolution of the Universe (Tangible) from the Formless and Intangible Brahma

The fourth *Brahmana* of the first chapter narrates how Prajapati created this world out of union and copulation. The evolution of the universe and its description follows. This universe before becoming conspicuous was intangible but it assumed a name and form afterwards. There can be no effect without a cause. The preserver and protector of this universe, the Supreme God assumed a form and the senses to perform the necessary actions and duties.This divinity of that Supreme God is present in an intangible form in each and every creature. Just as the fire is concealed in the *kashtha* (wood), similarly this *atman* (soul) is hidden in the body. People cannot see the soul because it is not perceivable or decipherable.

The Oneness of the Formless and the One with Form and the Benefits of the Propitiation of the Same

The tangible and palpable universe is incomplete. The body develops a relation with the *jeevatman* (unredeemed soul). The *prana* assumes different names because of the actions performed, i.e. speech, sight, hearing, thinking, smelling, etc. But it remains incomplete.

Hence, we should propitiate the *atman* (soul) as it is the soul where all—the mind, the *prana* become one. The ultimate thing in this world is the *atman*. The person who realizes the entire universe eventually attains bliss.

Incantation for Praising *Prana Vrata*

The fifth *Brahmana* of the first chapter speaks of the creation of food for the soul and also its spiritual analysis. The other things mentioned are: the method to realize the three worlds, the philosophy of Adhidaiva, *Adhyatma prana darshan*, and the glory of the *Devaloka* (abode of the gods).

This *prana* itself is God. The sun rises and sets from this *prana*. This *dharma* has been created by those gods. It is there today and shall remain tomorrow.

Isavasyopanishad

The *Isa*, also called the *Ishavasyopanishad*, derives its name from the opening word of the text *Isavasya* or *Isa*. It belongs to the Vajasaneyi school of the *Yajur Veda*. The *Vajasaneyi Samhita* consists of forty chapters of which this *Upanishad* is the last.

Its main purpose is to teach the essential unity of God and the world, being and becoming. It does not lay much in the Absolute in itself, *Parabrahman*, as in the Absolute in relation to the world, *Paramesvara*. It teaches that life in the world and life in the divine spirit are not incompatible.

Introduction

The *Isavasyopanishad* is the fourth chapter of the *Kanva Shakha Samhita* of the *Yajur Veda*. It is of special significance as it is a part of the incantation section. The scholars have ascribed *Isavasyopanishad* as the first *Upanishad*. The thirty-ninth chapter of this *Shukla Yajur Veda* speaks of rituals and in the fortieth chapter, the glory of the divine cosmic soul or the knowledge of the supreme self is deliberated. This is also referred to as the *Jnana Kanda*. In this *Upanishad*, the first incantation, the word Ishaavasyam' the title is discerned, and hence *Isavasyopanishad*.

Aum Purnamadaha Purnamidam ।
Purnaata Purna Achyute ।

Purnasya Purnamaadaya Purna
Mevavashishyatee ।
Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

The book starts with an invocation, recited as *Mangalacharan* (the auspicious inception) to sing the glory of the supreme god saying that Parabrahma (supreme divine cosmic soul) is embellished with all the qualities tangible and intangible. It is through this supreme cosmic soul that this universe is evolved. Because this universe has evolved from the one complete and total, the universe also is devoid of beginning and is infinite.

This total or complete is so significant that even if one literally decides to deduct or remove the cosmos and universe from that 'complete or total energy', it shall remain constant, i.e. total. Even if this universe does not remain, the divine cosmic energy is devoid of beginning and is infinite.

The *Vedas* are the holy commandments of the gods for mankind. The entire universe or cosmos is pervaded by that supreme cosmic energy. One should renounce all attachments and desires, engaging only in selflessly fulfilling all duties. One can enjoy worldly pleasures only in the process of fulfilling one's duties. One should not unnecessarily indulge in material, ephemeral pleasures. These material objects of pleasure belong to none other than the supreme energy. Partake of these pleasures is a blessing (*prasad*) that one has got from the supreme god.

He who performs all his duties according to the scriptures and their directives indirectly worship God in reality. Those who work selflessly are not caught in the bondage of actions or *karma*. There is no way that one can escape the chains of *karma*.

He who has the banal influences of ego and attachment, performs all his duties with the sole intention of enjoying worldly objects, gets trapped in the vicious cycle of life and death and has to bear the good and bad benefits tirelessly. Moreover, he has to transverse many an inferior and mean birth and bear a lot of suffering and misery. That is why human being should attain the real truth and pave its own way towards the well being of the self.

He who is all-pervasive, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchanging is one for all. Even the gods and the sages have not realized him in reality. The energy the gods possess is just one fragment of the divine cosmic energy. They cannot do anything without divine inspiration and intervention.

Divine love is the greatest feature of divine energy. He is the source of all the contradictory features and natures. Even if he is devoid of birth, he takes birth, even being formless, assumes form and even being devoid of characteristics assumes a nature. Wherever and whenever a devotee invokes him or calls him for help, he is always present. He is very far from us yet very close to us. The entire world is embellished with this cosmic energy inside out.

The knowledgeable person who sees God in all creatures and sees all the creatures in God becomes happy and experiences incessantly the beauty of God. If we realize God, we get liberated from all the miseries and attachments that continually plague us.

He who is always absorbed in the divine cosmic energy attains the blissful state. He gradually loses the 'self' and merges into the divine cosmic energy.

Realization of God and Its Benefits

The great soul who continually experiences the beauty of divinity is freed from the body made up of five elements which accrues from auspicious and inauspicious actions. The person is liberated from the vicious cycle of birth and death. Such a person resides permanently in the divine god.

The Characteristic of Ignorance

The instrument which is availed to realize the divine soul, i.e. knowledge is known as *vidya* or divine knowledge. The means used to realize heaven, i.e. *karma* is known as *avidya* or 'false knowledge'. The person who realizes both, i.e. knowledge and action is the person who becomes successful in realizing the divinity and attains everything.

Those who indulge in sensual pleasures and worldly pleasures fall into the darkness of ignorance because of their actions, take birth in all forms and eventually destroy the virtues of the human body.

A person who is self-conceited and narcissistic is one who shirks all responsibilities and duties and is totally controlled by sensual impulses. Such people who consider themselves knowledgeable suffer more than those who engage in actions which stem out of desires. Unfortunately, that have to take birth in inferior forms suffer immensely.

The Fruits of Selfless Action

The best benefit or fruit of knowledge is the total absorption of a person in the divine cosmic energy. A self-conceited person unfortunately has to undergo unimaginable suffering. Similarly, if we perform all our duties without vanity, attachment and desire then the fruits one begets are undoubtedly sublime and divine. If one does it with a desire then one has to take rebirth and falls in the vicious cycle of birth and death.

The Principle of Knowledge and Action

Those who understand in totality and perspicuity the principles of actions and knowledge tread on the path of duty selflessly which is according to the scriptures and adheres to the *Varnashramas* (four stages to be realized by a human) method.

As a result, one is blessed with a good and peaceful life and attains a state of balance and equipoise. The mind of such a person becomes pure and purulent and can very easily cross the ocean of material life with the blessings of the supreme god. Such a person eventually becomes detached from all worldly objects, realizes the self and merges into divinity.

The Result of Action that Stems from Desire

He who confides in the idea that all the worldly objects, i.e. women, children, wealth, authority, fame are true and unchanging and indulges in them blatantly, who prays to the deceased ancestors, other gods and other people just to beget material pleasures has to take birth in inferior forms which are in no way fruitful and beneficial to the self.

The person who does not understand human life, the greatness of God and instead engages in social work and worship other gods, feels that he is equal to God and thus engages in evil deeds and actions. Such people as a result are bonded to miseries and sufferings throughout.

The Difference between Selfless and Selfish Actions

A person can quite easily attain divinity and bliss singing the praises of God, listening to the divine plays and incessantly being absorbed in Him with faith, devotion and pristine love.

If one prays to the deceased ancestors according to the scriptures by adhering to God's commands and with the idea of selflessly performing one's duties, one achieves purification of the mind. As a result, even God becomes happy and blesses him so that he can transcend the material world.

Divine Benefits of Detachment and Judgement

A person's life can be peaceful and full of happiness only when he realizes that God is devoid of natural qualities, is embellished with divine characteristics and merits to do welfare of all. All that which is ephemeral, material, changing and transitory is the root cause of suffering. All the inertia in this universe is God's and no one else's. As a result, all our shortcomings, weaknesses and flaws that over-shadow our personality are eliminated and our mind becomes peaceful, pure and calm.

Method of Praying/Worshipping God

The devotees pray to God in the following manner—Oh God! You are the nourisher of this entire universe. It is you who nurtures this universe. Your devotion itself is truth and I am engaged in it. So, please fulfill all my desires. Your divine face is radiant like the Sun. I want to experience your beauty directly. For the same, please remove all the obstacles and hurdles that hinder me. May I experience your divine energy and bliss."

"You are the one who nurtures the devotion of all the devotees, you are the embodiment of knowledge and you bestow all your devotees with knowledge. You are the one who regulates the entire universe and are the ultimate aim of all scholars and sages. You are unintelligible and unfathomable but because you love your devotees, you can be won over by eternal love. I realize that you are the soul of this entire cosmos, this is itself my soul that is why I am a fragment of you."

Impatience of a Devotee to Serve His Lord

When a devotee becomes impatient to renounce the world, falls on the feet of the Lord and serves him, his feelings are conveyed in the following manner—Oh Lord! May my life merge into the air, may my body be incinerated. O Vishnu! Remember me when I am on the verge of death because if you remember me and my actions I shall not end in misfortune and suffering.

"I yearn to fall on your feet and serve you with mind, heart and soul."

On the Path to Bliss

A practitioner of spirituality, a devotee treads on the path towards bliss from where a liberated soul never returns. He prays to all those gods on the way in the following manner. "O Agni! I yearn to serve my Lord. Please reach me there by leading me by the auspicious *Utarayana* path. You are the one who knows my deeds. I have worshipped my Lord all throughout my life. It is

His blessings that I am experiencing the beauty of God this moment."

"Even if you think that there is any action performed or not performed by me is an obstacle then please eliminate it by blessing me. I prostrate before you with respect and honour."

Taittiriya Upanishad

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* belongs to the Taittiriya school of the *Yajur Veda*. It is divided into three sections called *vallis*. The first is the *Siksa Valli*. *Siksa* is the first of the six *Vedangas* (limbs or auxiliaries of the *Veda*); it is the science of phonetics and pronunciation. The second is the *Brahmananda Valli* and the third is the *Bhrugu Valli*. These two deal with the knowledge of the supreme self, *paramatma-jnana*.

Introduction

This *Upanishad* is an integral part of the *Taittiriya* Aranyaka of the *Taittiriya* branch of the Krishna *Yajur Veda*. Amongst the ten chapters of the *Taittiriya* Aranyaka the seventh, eighth and ninth chapters comprise the *Taittiriya Upanishad*.

Peace Innovation

Aum Sham No Mitraha Sham Varunana ।
Sham No Bhavatvaryama । *Sham No Indro Brihaspathihi* ।
Sham No Vishnuuru-Kamaha ।
Namo Brahmane Namaste Vaayo ।
Twameva Pratyaksham Bramaasi ।
Tvameva Pratyakasham Brahma Vadishyami ।
Ritam Vadishyami । *Satyam Vadishyami* ।
Tanmam Avatu ।

Tadvaktaram Avatu | *Avatu Maama* | *Avatu Vaktaram* |
Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

Shiksha Valli

In the first chapter, the divine Cosmic spirit is praised by recitation of different names of that single force and is prayed by saying that, "may all the gods that represent the *Adhibhautik*, *Adhyatmik* and *Adhidaivik* be auspicious to all of us, who are also an integral part of that divine cosmic spirit. May there be no obstacles in our oath towards growth and progress. We prostrate before thy Lord, the supreme god who resides within one and all."

Second Chapter

Rules for Recitation of Vedic Incantations

Generally speaking, as far as possible, every person should try to maintain good diction and pronunciation while reciting every word of Vedic literature. Less than perfect pronunciation is allowed in common parlance, but the Vedic chants and *mantras* have to be recited properly so that they convey the right meaning and exert their right influence.

The syllables need to be pronounced accurately with proper effort. It is important to know the tone and the amount of time given to pronunciation while reciting, and the method of singing also needs to be known properly.

Third Chapter

The Method of Propitiations/Supplication

The principal teacher needs to enhance the knowledge of his disciple so that the disciple treads on the path towards self-realization.

Loka Samhitopaasanaa

'May the teacher as well as the pupil become successful, may they both become radiant'—in this way the prayer begins. Now we shall describe the secret of the *Samhitas* taking into consideration: the people, the worlds, the flames, the knowledge, the subjects and finally the body.

These all cumulatively are referred to as *Mahasamhita*. The first *Samhita* is concerned with the world or the earth. The prior form is earth and the latter form is heaven. The space is the junction between earth and heaven. The air is the regulator of the earth and the heaven.

Propitiation of *Samhita* Related to *Jyoti*

On this earth, Agni is the prior form of the *Samhita* related to the Jyoti and the latter form is the Sun which in the *Dyuloka*. The clouds are the junctions and the ultimate aim of clouds is lightning.

Propitiation of *Samhita* Related to *Vidya* (Knowledge)

Through this mantra, the importance of education and knowledge is emphasized. In the *Samhita*, the *acharya* or preceptor is the prior form and the disciple who is curious, devoted and serving is the latter form. The knowledge that is between the teacher and the disciple is the junction. When this junction is exposed, the ultimate aim is the sermon given by the teacher and that being understood by the devoted disciple. That person who realizes this and serves his teacher becomes a scholar unequivocally.

Propitiation of *Samhita* Related to Subjects

In this *Samhita*, the mother is the prior form and the father is the latter form. The child born from the union of both is the junction. The ultimate aim of this *Samhita* is begetting a child by having carnal relations according to the scriptures at the appropriate time.

Propitiation of Samhita Related to *Atman* (Soul)

The lower jaw is the prior form of the *Samhita* while the upper jaw is the latter form. The voice, which emerges between these, is the junction and the aim is the tongue because without a tongue a human being cannot speak or read. The speech or voice has tremendous energy. The voice has the energy to accrue in the physical and spiritual growth of every person.

The Benefits of All Five Types of Propitiations

The benefits of the five types of propitiation are as follows: the person who knows all these things begets a child according to his desire; by becoming embellished with knowledge he becomes radiant; he can attain all types of edible things, food and also different types of animals.

By gaining knowledge of the *Samhita* related to loka (world) one acquires a place in the super celestial region, by knowing the *Samhita* related *to jyoti*, one acquires knowledge of different material objects. By knowing the *Samhita* related to *praja* (subjects), he begets children, by knowing the *Samhita* related to (*vidya*) knowledge one acquires knowledge and radiance and by knowing the *Samhita* of spirituality, one acquires power of speech.

Fourth Chapter

Types of Prayers

In this chapter, the method of praying the Divine Cosmic Spirit is explained so that one can attain self-realization. 'Aum' is the name of the supreme God and it is the *mantra* nobler than the *mantras* mentioned in the *Vedas*. This divine supreme god is referred to as 'Indra' that embellishes one with knowledge. 'O Lord! May I preserve your divine form in my heart without any desire as such. May my tongue be very sweet and polite. May I listen to only good words which accrue in the well being of all. O Omkar! You are the treasure of the supreme god. In spite of this, you are enveloped by the material intellect of humans. O God! Please protect the prayer you have just heard.

O Supreme God, the protector of Agni! Please bless me with all types of things such as food, cows, etc. without delay. May all this just grow and prosper. Give me wealth along with all the other animals such as goats, sheep, etc.

It is the desire of all the *acharyas* that good, devoted people may come to me to acquire knowledge. May all the *Brahmacharis* be devoid of wickedness and may they all control their senses. May they all have control over their minds.'

In this way, the preceptor prays to the supreme god so that it results in the well being of the disciples and that they can attain all the material and celestial pleasures. The fourth chapter covers the following topics: method of attaining material and celestial pleasures, prayer to the supreme god and method of performing religious sacrifice.

Fifth Chapter

In the fifth chapter, the method of propitiation of the four *Vyahritis* is mentioned, that is, *Bhu, Bhuvaha, Swaha* and *Maha,* its secrets and the fruits. 'Bhu' is *Agni* (fire) but not in the literal sense, *Bhuvaha* is *Vayu* (air), *Swaha* is the Sun, and *Maha* is the Moon.

Here *Bhu*, *Bhuvaha* and *Swaha* represent *prana, apana* and *vyana* respectively.

Sixth Chapter

The sixth chapter speaks of the different relations of the topics covered in the previous chapters. There is a place in this heart where Divine Cosmic Spirit resides. One can realize Him there itself. One does not need to go anywhere else to realize Him.

Seventh Chapter

This chapter comprises two parts. The first section is divided into three parts, i.e. the material objects such as *loka, jyoti* and *sthool padartha*.

The second section is divided into three parts, i.e. the important spiritual elements based in the body, viz. *prana, kaarana* and *dhatu* which are discussed briefly. The method of usage of all this is explained in the concluding chapter. The appropriate usage of all the material and minute objects and their realization can lead to material growth. This is the synopsis of this chapter.

Eight Chapter

In this chapter, the greatness of 'Omkar' (Divine Cosmic Spirit) is described so that people have faith and devotion towards the same. 'Omkar' itself is the supreme god. Before reciting the name of 'Omkar', all the devotees say this prayer—'Bless me with the intellect to understand the *Vedas*'.

Ninth Chapter

The ninth chapter instructs that people who engage in the study and teachings should tread on the path that has been spoken of in the scriptures. This should be understood by even those who give and listen to sermons, etc. Study and teaching are undoubtedly important but the scriptures help to realize our duties and the benefits by working towards our goal assiduously.

Other than this, the things to be followed are good conduct, abstaining from telling lies, to bear pain, to uphold ones *dharma*, to control the mind and the senses, to perform *yagya*, hospitality towards guests, following the conduct of the householder, to practise austerities and penance and self-study.

Tenth Chapter

A sage named Trishanku realized the supreme god and narrated his experiences. This chapter comprises these narrations. He says: 'I have uprooted this world which is nothing but a deadly cycle of life and death. This is my final birth. My glory is like a mountain which is gigantic. I am pure and now immortal.'

Eleventh Chapter

Important instructions for a householder are mentioned in this chapter. *Acharyas* after teaching the *Vedas*, performing the *Samavartan Sanskara* teach the person to become a householder. They say: 'Son! Always speak the truth, do not seek recourse to lies even if the situations are adverse; adhere to all the rules coveted to the *Varnashrama* system. That is self-study, holy baths and supplications, recitation of Gayatri mantra and singing the praises of thy Lord.

Never neglect your duties. As fee, give wealth to your Guru with love and devotion. Engage in perpetuation of the family through procreation.

O Son! Consider your mother, father, guests as gods and respect them. Do not engage in any act that transgresses the rules. Engage in penance, good conduct, knowledge, etc. which is sublime. Serve people, donate benevolently and with respect, give and donate out of pity and compassion.

If you are in a dilemma while performing any of your duties, consult scholars and Brahmins and act according to their instructions. This is the decree of the scriptures.'

Twelfth Chapter

Gratitude is expressed and praises are sung of that divine cosmic spirit who is the protector of all the energies. "May all the gods, i.e. Mitra, Varuna who represents the *Adhibhautik*, *Adhidaivik* and *Adhyatmik* be auspicious for all of us. May there be no obstacle in our path towards progress. We prostrate before Thee Lord, the supreme god who dwells within one and all."

Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!!!

Kathaopanishad

Katha Upanishad, also called *Kathaopanishad* which belongs to the Taittiriya school of the *Yajur Veda*, uses the setting of a story found in ancient Sanskrit literature. A poor and pious Brahman, Vajasravasa, performs a sacrifice and gives as presents to the priests a few old and feeble cows. His son, Nachiketas, feeling disturbed by the unreality of his father's observance of the sacrifice, proposes that he himself may be offered as offering (*daksina*) to a priest. When he persisted in his request, his father in rage said, 'Unto Yama, I give thee.' Nachiketa goes to the abode of Yama and finding him absent, waits there for three days and nights unfed. Yama on his return, offers three gifts in recompense for the delay and discomfort caused to Nachiketa. For the first, Nachiketa asked, "Let me return alive to my father." For the second, "Tell me how my good works (*ista-purta*) may not be exhausted'" the third, he said "Tell me the way to conquer re-death (*punar mrityu*)."

In the *Upanishad*, the third request is one for enlightenment on the 'great transition' which is called death. The *Upanishad* consists of two chapters, each of which has three *vallis* or sections. There are some passages common to the *Gita* and *Katha Upanishad*.

Taittiriya Brahmana III. I. 8; see also *Mahabharat Anusasana Parva* : 106. The first mention of the story is in the *Rig Veda* (X. 135) where we read how the boy Nachiketa was sent by his father to Yama (Death), but was allowed to get back on account of his great faith, *sraddha*.

Introduction

The *Kathaopanishad* is very famous amongst the *Upanishads*. It is an integral part of the 'Katha' branch of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. The comprehensive description of the ethereal divine element of the supreme god is expressed through the conversation between Rishiputra Nachiketa and Yama.

Peace Invocation

Aum Sahanaavavatu | *Sahanao Bhunaktu* |
Sshaviryam Karvavahai |
Tajasvi Navthetamstu |
Ma Vidvishvhai |
Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

'O Brahma! Protect both of us, the teacher and the disciple in all ways. Please nourish both of us. May we both become strong, may we become radiant because of the knowledge imbibed by us. May we never be tormented by mutual hatred. O Supreme God! May we be liberated from the miseries and worries.'

The Donation by Maharshi Uddalaka in the *Vishwajityagya*

During the Vedic times, Uddalaka, the son of Aruna who was the son of Vajabhrava, performed a *yagya*. In a *yagya*, one has to donate whatever he possesses.

Accordingly, Uddalaka called upon all the Ritwijas and other members and donated everything in the form of *dakshina* (fee offering). Nachiketa was the honest son of Uddalaka. He was a young lad then. When he saw that senile cows were being donated as *dakshina*, he thought that as a result of such a *dakshina*, the donor would have have to undergo a vale of sufferings by taking birth in such inferior *yonis* as pigs and dogs. As Uddalaka loved his son a lot, he was giving away all the aged cows and keeping all the healthy ones for himself. Realizing this, Nachiketa asked: "Whom are you donating me to?" Uddalaka got infuriated and said: "I shall hand you over to Yamaraja."

When Uddlaka said this out of fury, Nachiketa thought, "I am one of the best disciples of my father. I have never transgressed my father's orders and that means I am not of the inferior category. Then why did father say this to me? What is the purpose my father wants to fulfill by handing me over to Yamaraja. I shall definitely materialize my father's words. I shall not violate his orders otherwise I shall be called an inferior male child. If my father does not adhere to his words he shall be known as the one who deviates or derelicts from his duty. If my father has said this out of fury, it is necessary to pacify him so that he does not undergo anguish and agony.

Nachiketa approached his father and said—"O Father! Our ancestors, our grandfather did not care for their lives to protect truth and we have the conduct of many a noble soul before us who have sacrificed everything and stood by their words. That is why you also renounce this ephemeral mortal world, wrong conduct and duties. By doing so give me the permission to go to Yamaraj."

Listening to this, Uddalaka became sad but seeing the honesty and venality of Nachiketa, he sent Nachiketa to Yamaraja.

Nachiketa went to Yamaraja on the basis of his truthfulness. On reaching there he learnt that Yamaraja was not present in his house. Nachiketa decided that he would not touch food and water until he had sought the blessings of Yamaraja. Yamaraja did not return for three days and Nachiketa starved for these three days and awaited his return.

The Hospitality of Yamaraja's Wife

On the return of Yamaraja after three days, Yamaraja's wife said: "O Lord! The coming of a Brahmin as a guest to the house of householders is just like the coming of Agni Dev (fire god). Hence, the good and pious people should try to pacify Agni in the form of a guest by serving him and offering him food. This Brahmin boy has been starving for the past three days awaiting your return. He shall be pacified only if you serve him.

That person does not get anything who does not offer food to a Brahmin and keeps him starved. Even if one gets anything as a result, he does not get happiness from that particular thing. He remains far from the happiness one can beget from good speech. All his previous *karmas*, actions, such as donations, building of wells, hospices, etc. get destroyed. Not only this, by disrespecting the guest, he also remains bereft of children, animals, etc. that he should get due to his past deeds. Hence O Dharmaraj! Please welcome your guest and pacify him with your service."

The Cordial Welcome of Nachiketa by Yamaraja

Listening to his wife, Yamaraja immediately approached Nachiketa and welcomed him by washing his feet and performing the ceremonial worship. He said: "O Brahmin! You are our respectable and venerable guest. You came here three days' back to meet me and have been starving since then. I have really committed a blunder. I prostrate before you. May my dereliction be forgiven and lead to my well being. In lieu of every night, you can ask me for three favours, as you desire."

The First Blessing: 'Father's Happiness'

At Yamaraja's behest, Nachiketa asked him his first favour, i.e., to make his father happy. This itself proves the amount of respect and affection of Nachiketa towards his father.

Nachiketa said: "O Lord of Death! May my father's anger be pacified and when I return, may he treat me like his son and treat me with love and affection. May he be always happy with me."

"When your father will see you, after returning from the clutches of death, he will be very happy with you. He shall treat you henceforth with love and affection. His anger will vanish and he will forever live in peace and happiness." said Yamaraja.

The Second Blessing: 'Knowledge of Realization'

Nachiketa told Yamaraja: "O Lord of Death! I have learnt that there is a lot of happiness in heaven and that place is devoid of fear, senility, hunger, thirst, grief, sorrow, etc. You know the *Agni Vijnana* (method of doing *yagya*) by which one can attain heaven. Please teach me the devoted one, the knowledge to realize heaven. This is the second blessing I desire."

Listening to this Yamaraja was pleased with the devotion and humility of Nachiketa and bestowed upon him the *Agni Vidya* which is ethereal. As a cross examination, Yamaraja asked Nachiketa to repeat all that he had learnt. Nachiketa repeated everything as he had learnt it from Yamaraja. Listening to this Yamaraja was surprised at the boy's strange intellect and blessed him that *Agni Vidya* shall be known by his name. Yamaraja presented Nachiketa the method of performing different *yagyas* so that he attains godhood. This was the special gift of Yamaraj to Nachiketa.

The Benefits of *Agni Vidya*

Yamaraja said that this *Agni Vidya* would be known by the name of Nachiketa and that this knowledge can be bestowed upon one not only to reach heaven but also to attain salvation. That person who performs the religious sacrifice thrice but conjoining its relation to the three *Vedas* becomes conversant in all of them. Such a person selflessly performs penance, donation and is eventually delivered from the cycle of life and death. He realizes the evolution of the world creator Brahma, by this Agni and is embellished by infinite powers.

The Third Blessing: 'Knowledge of the Self'

Nachiketa asked Yamaraja for the knowledge of the self which is the means to liberation as the third and final blessing. He said: "O Lord of Death! There is a difference of opinion with the concept of soul. You are the self-realized one. Please advise me about that divine element of the self that will help me surmount the cycle of life and death."

Yamaraj's Explanation that the Element of Soul is Unintelligible

Seeing the curiosity of the young lad and divine understanding, Yamaraja was very pleased. But he was aware that the element of soul could be explained only to the appropriate person, so he decided to test Nachiketa. He told Nachiketa that the 'soul' is difficult to understand. He said: "O Nachiketa! Even the gods had expressed their doubts with relation to the divine cosmic element 'soul' and they failed to understand it because it is a very complex and subtle subject. It is not easily intelligible and comprehensible. So, you ask me for another blessing."

But Nachiketa was adamant and he replied: "When such a subject is difficult and sublime and I will not find a person who knows the same, how can I ask for another blessing in lieu of this one. Please bless me with the knowledge of the same."

The Allurements Shown by Yamaraja to Nachiketa

When Nachiketa was adamant about knowing the knowledge of the soul Yamaraja decided to allure and entice him differently.

Allurements of Material Happiness

Yamaraja said: "O Nachiketa! What will you do by knowing the soul. In lieu of this ask for progeny, wife who will be blessed with a very long life, cows, elephants, gold, the earth as the empire and a long life. If in comparison of the element of soul, you consider all these material pleasures significant then ask for them."

But despite all these allurements, Nachiketa was adamant. He refused to give in.

Allurements of Heavenly Pleasures

Yamaraja continued: "O Nachiketa! One cannot attain heavenly pleasures on earth. You can ask for all of them. You can desire for the beautiful damsels of heaven and divine vehicles that even tempt noble sages and saints. Ask for these pleasures in lieu and stop asking for divine knowledge."

Nachiketa's Detachment

Nachiketa said: "O Yamaraja! All the pleasures which you tempted me for are momentary and ephemeral. These pleasures ruin the senses and the sense of duty instead of blessing us.

A long life is negligible before infinite time. Even cows and elephants are of no use to me. So, I don't want any of these things. Even wealth cannot satisfy a human being. Seeking your blessings satisfies me. Destiny will bestow upon me the necessary wealth and life is dependent on you. If you are pleased with me, I need not fear death at all. Hence, please bless me with the knowledge of the human self and soul."

When Yamaraj was assured that Nachiketa was the appropriate person to whom knowledge of the supreme soul could be given, he began by telling Nachiketa the glory of *Brahma Vidya*.

The *Vedas* speak of two ways to get happiness:

1. Shreya: The method to transcend all miseries and attain the supreme spirit.
2. Preya: The method to attain material pleasures, i.e. wealth, wife, progeny, etc.

Both these pleasures are antipodes of each other and attract human beings towards them. Most people get happiness through material pleasures and are attracted by the *Preya*. But there are some fortunate people who realize the mortality of this world and the transition of material pleasures. Such people are attracted towards

Shreya.

Such people are blessed with divinity and in all ways. People who are attached to worldly pleasures do not understand the real essence of the supreme spirit. They are deluded and assume the material pleasure to be the highest form of pleasure. They are bereft of all sublime happiness and pleasure.

Praises of Nachiketa's Detachment

Yamaraja said: "O Nachiketa! I have realized that you are detached and are intelligent and sagacious. You have not accepted the material bondage. You are the right person to understand and realize the divine cosmic spirit."

The Inevitability of Detachment for Self-realization

The characteristics and the benefits of *Vidya* and *Avidya* are in fact contradictory. Those people who merely seek material pleasures cannot think of spiritual growth and he who seeks self realization does not even look at material pleasures.

"O Nachiketa! You are desirous of *Vidya* as the greatest of material desires cannot entice you."

Those people who are self-conceited and do not show respect towards scholars cannot understand the concept of divine truth. On the contrary, they criticize and hate them, engage in material happiness and pleasures and waste their time in ephemeral enjoyments.

That person who does not realize the significance of human life is attached towards wealth and pleasure and acts as he wishes. He just cannot strive for higher ideals, as he cannot repose his faith in things he cannot see. Such a person undergoes incessant transmigration and his state is despicable and repugnable."

Dearth of the Realized Ones

The knowledge of realization is inaccessible. People seldom discuss all this. Either we listen to it as it is sublime or we neglect it, as we are not intelligent enough to understand it.

Those people who understand the real meaning and fathom the real depth are few in numbers. Such people are the ones who take sermons from their Guru, contemplate and practise meditation and consequently experience the beauty of the supreme soul.

Inaccessibility of Self-realization

The soul is intangible. It is so very deep and profound that it becomes impossible to fathom. It is difficult to impregnate. Those people who have not realized the soul engage in discussions and debates and conclude finally that the soul is not intelligent.

Yamaraja said: "O Nachiketa! I am pleased to see your chaste mind and your allegiance. Such devotion towards knowledge cannot be obtained by logic. We realize some of the things through the sermons of the realized ones."

"O Nachiketa! I pray to God that I always get curious listeners like you."

The Praises of the Selflessness Exhibited

Yamaraja said: "O Nachiketa! It is true that all material pleasures are transitory. We cannot attain immortality by the aid of ephemeral things. Realizing this, I have attained the supreme knowledge by performing *yagyas* selflessly.

O Nachiketa! You are intelligent and selfless. I have kept before you the entire heaven which is embellished with all pleasures which would be attained by *yagya* and allied good deeds, but you, very patiently renounced all that. This is something extraordinary. You are thus the right person who will be able to realize divinity."

The Glory of the Supreme God

The divine element is present in the entire universe which is like a dense forest. Although that divine element stays with us, we cannot see Him as He has covered Himself in *Yoga maya* (delusion). He who incessantly meditates on the divine cosmic element and has a pure and chaste mind and heart can experience His beauty; such a person is devoid of happiness and pain.

Hence we should engage in listening to the glory of the Lord as orated by the noble souls and should thereafter contemplate on it. We should practise control of the mind and should dwell in solitude.

Such a person attains God, the embodiment of happiness. "O Nachiketa! The path leading to God-hood is open for you." said Yamaraja.

The Oath to Describe the Divine Cosmic Element

Yamaraj decided that he should now, according to the promise given, tell Nachiketa the essence of the divine cosmic element. He started saying: "That Supreme God is worth to be attained by all worshippers and means. His name is Aumkar. Although he is nameless, he has infinite epithets. Seeking the refuge of these countless names, he realizes this secret and worships him with indomitable faith and love" undoubtedly attains the supreme god.

The Form of Soul

The soul is devoid of beginning and end. It is infinite and is devoid of cause and effect. Thus, it is devoid of life and death. It is one and flawless. The body ceases to exist but the soul is indestructible.

The Form of Supreme God

The supreme god is smaller than the atom and is all-pervasive. The devotee realizes the glory and experiences the beauty. Seldom do we come across a person who as a result of God's divine blessings is devoid of sorrow and desires.

The energy of the supreme god is simply unimaginable and undecipherable. He is embellished with contradictory merits. He engages in the good and bad divine play simultaneously. Hence, he is all-pervasive and is omnipresent. He is seated in each and every form and creature. We can realize him only through his divine blessings.

The Appropriate People for Realization of God

The person who realizes God is mentally balanced, rational, devoid of self-conceit and free from happiness and sorrow.

We cannot realize God by merely listening to the divine play by engaging in the study of the scriptures or by engaging in acrimonious debates. Those people are the blessed ones who await God's blessings and do not have faith in their own efforts. These people are liberated from delusion and they are the ones who in reality experience the beauty of God.

People Unfit for Realization

Those people are considered unfit for realization who do not renounce despicable acts, incessantly engage in material pleasures, remain in vagrancy due to lack of faith and whose minds and senses are not within control.

Even though such people engage in self analysis, they do not respect God's infinite blessings and are always bereft of God's divine grace.

The supreme god is the time of time. He is the ultimate refuge of each and every creature. How can He be known by the mind intellect and the senses? Only he can realize God who has His divine grace.

The Relation Between the Supreme Soul and the Unredeemed Soul

The supreme cosmic soul is seated in the heart of the unredeemed soul or *jeeva*. Both of them together partake truth. The *jeevatma* and the supreme soul are different, like the shadow and the sun. The unredeemed soul is ignorant or knows less while the supreme soul is omniscient. The little knowledge possessed by the jeeva also belongs to the supreme soul. Hence, a human being should not have ego about one's capabilities and aptitudes.

The Noblest Method to Attain God—Prayer

Yamaraja prays to the supreme God and says: "O Lord! Give us that assiduity by which we can selflessly perform good deeds such as *yagya* so that we can make you happy and realize the ultimate truth and experience your beauty."

The best way hence to realize the supreme god is nothing but prayer.

The Metaphor of the Chariot and Charioteer

The *jeeva* is the master of the chariot. This body itself is the chariot. The intellect is the charioteer, the mind the reins, the senses are the horses and the material pleasures are the paths on which the senses run.

The desires and the person suffering is the human who is embellished by a body, a mind, the senses, etc. Humans should try to attain the supreme god on the basis of the mind and the senses. Unfortunately, due to negligence, human being became careless and the intellect was bereft of the divine inclination. The reins were not in control of the mind and the mind delegated its duty to the wicked senses.

As a result, the senses took control of the human mind and body. The human being thus became dependent and eventually indulged in ephemeral and material pleasures. He got caught in the vicious cycle of birth and death. He continued to take birth in inferior *yonis* such as dogs and pigs.

But a cautious and sagacious person makes the mind calm and stable and orients the mind towards spiritual thoughts, frees himself from desire and hatred and surrenders himself at the feet of the supreme god. By being selfless, he attains the highest state of bliss and divinity from where he never returns.

The Scientific Analysis of the Senses

Orienting oneself towards God means disinclining the senses from the wrong path of enjoyment. The material pleasures are stronger than the senses and that is why the senses should be kept away from material pleasures. The mind is stronger than the material allurements.

If the mind remains detached, the senses and the material allurements are thoroughly conquered. Hence, one should cleanse the mind of desire and hatred and control the impulses of the fickle mind. This can be done by the concerted efforts of the intellect. But superior to the intellect is the soul. All have to knowingly or unknowingly agree to the decree passed by the soul. One should keep a watch on the intellect by one's latent divine energy.

The delusion (*maya*) embellished by is stronger than *the jeeva* due to which the *jeeva* cannot realize God. The *jeeva* cannot curtail the delusion with his individual efforts. By being blessed by God along can he transcend the delusion. But there is nothing superior to the supreme god. The *jeeva's* well being lies in surrendering himself at the feet of God.

That supreme god is omnipresent and dwells in the heart of each and every one. But he is hiding behind the vast curtain of (delusion maya). They who seek refuge and tune their intellect towards Him, are endowed with divine powers by which they attain the supreme god.

Caution on the Path of Spirituality

The intellectual human being should curb the impulses of the senses and should orient them towards the mind. He should instate the mind in the intellect and the intellect into the pure form of the unredeemed soul.

Doing so, such a state is attained that one does not perceive anything other than the divine soul. After this one should orient oneself in the supreme cosmic spirit.

The Shrutis say—O Humans! You all are in deep slumber of ignorance. You have finally attained this precious human body. Do not engage in negligence and in wastage of time in futile ephemeral things. On the contrary, seek the blessings of noble souls and tread on the path advised by them so that you realize the supreme divine soul. This element is difficult to understand and follow. The only way to realize this divine soul is to tread on the path bequeathed to us by our great noble people.

The Benefits of the Realization of the Supreme God

As the supreme god is beyond palpability and tangibility, he is not intelligent. Our lay senses, mind and intellect cannot imagine reaching out to the divine element.

By realization of the divine cosmic element, one transcends death and transmigration.

The Senses Cannot Gauge or Fathom the Supreme God

The supreme cosmic soul resides in all the human beings and creatures but is not perceivable by anyone. Things like speech are gross and are esoteric. The senses can only experience those esoteric things that are gross and palpable. But these senses can be oriented towards pure things with which one can lead a healthy life and tread towards the supreme god. That is why God has made the opening of the senses towards external ambience. As humans are ignorant and not judicious, they fall prey to the material evils. Seldom does a sublime soul realize the divine soul by the aid of self-study, company of noble souls and by the grace of supreme god.

With the aim of realizing Brahma, he suppresses the senses externally and orients them in spiritual thoughts. As a result, he experiences the beauty of the supreme god.

The Aid of Human Life

The human birth is nobler and superior to all other forms of birth. The ultimate objective cannot be at any cost 'hedonism'. That person loses the golden opportunity of emancipation who indulges in seeking pleasure only. He is plagued by death and transmigration.

Those people who orient themselves towards the supreme soul and suppress all the impulses of the mind and senses attain immortality. Immortality can be attained with the aid of this body itself. Just as we realize the material world with our inner energy, we can simultaneously realize the transition of this world too. We realize that all these things are subject to change but amongst all these things, the supreme soul is constant, unchanging, immutable and eternal.

It is by his inspiration that we see all the incidents occurring in our daily life again in our dreams and in the para-conscious state. By realizing the supreme soul, the human being transcends all miseries.

Supreme God: The Cause of the Universe

All things from Brahma to the creature take birth from the divine cosmic spirit. Everything is merely an expression of that spirit. But He is one and only one though He takes different forms. Though He dwells in the heart of one and all, He is one and only one.

That intangible energy is not different from Supreme God. Just as Agni resides in the wood and on friction assumes its original form, supreme god is pleased with prayer and praises.

The Sun resides in supreme god. No god can understand the glory of that supreme god. But God is all-pervasive. The difference seen in form is the perception of the ignorant and such people are subjected to life and death.

All that is tangible and intangible, palpable and unpalpable, esoteric and exoteric, is nothing but

Supreme God. By contemplating in this manner, the soul develops a relation with the supreme soul.

The Metaphor of Body as a City

The human body has nine doors, that is, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, one mouth, one anus and one penis.

This body is like the city of the invincible and the indestructible. This human body is the capital on which the supreme god presides like a king. The person who realizes the body to be the abode of divinity and propitiates God by name, recitation, bhajans, etc. is freed from sorrow and pain and is eventually liberated from life and death.

The Omnipotent Supreme God

The god named Vasus also reside in that place where the supreme god resides. They are the ones who come to the homes of householders as guests. They are like the brilliant Agni in the sacrificial altar and are the ones who give sacrifice.

They are present in form of all human beings, all the deceased ancestors and superior gods. They reside in the sky and in truth. They are present in the fish, conch, *sukti* (good statements), in different *yagyas* and their fruits, in mountains and rivers.

In all ways, they are superior, great and are the embodiments of truth. The activity initiated in the inanimate things, *prana, apana* is the grace of the supreme god itself.

All the gods of the senses perform cautiously all their respective duties to please the supreme god.

When the human being dies, the soul transmigrates while the mind, senses and intellect desert the body.

Only the supreme god resides in the body; He is never eliminated.

The Ultimate State Attainable by the Unredeemed Soul

Yamaraja said: "O Nachiketa! You asked where does the *jeeva* go after death. I shall now tell you the fact.

The *jiva* assumes another body after death, according to one's good and bad actions.

If he has performed good actions he begets a human body again. But if his actions were bad, he has to take birth in lower and inferior *yonis* such as dogs, birds, etc. Those who perform a lot of bad *karma* have to eventually assume forms of trees, plants, mountains, creepers, etc."

The Form of Supreme God

God creates different *karmas* and their fruits. Even at the time of final annihilation, the supreme god lies awake and monitors everything. He is the embodiment of truth.

No one can transgress the rules created and established by him. He is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. No one can ever transcend his glory.

Just like fire is pervasive in this entire universe, but attains the form of the thing it burns, the omnipotent supreme god is one and only one. But He assumes form in different creatures. He is just like air which assumes form and energy according to the things that contain it. It is dependent upon the Sun in whose light and energy people perceive things differently and do different types of *karmas*.

God is beyond pain, sorrow, grief, happiness and all titles. He is autonomous and voluntary.

Great scholars see Him within themselves. By this they are bestowed with bliss and divine happiness. Even the Sun's radiance seems negligible before the divine halo of God. All things are enkindled and enlightened by the fragment of that divine brilliance.

Supreme God—The Root of the Three in the Form of Universe

This entire world resembles a pipal tree. The supreme god is the most superior amongst all. The main branch is Brahma and the sub-branches are the gods, the ancestors, human beings, animals, etc. This pipal tree has been in existence from time immemorial. The cause of this tree is Brahma and that itself is immortality. The entire world seeks refuge in Him.

Although the supreme god is the ocean of compassion, he is also the greatest form of terror. All gods accordingly try to appease Brahma. The realized one is delivered from this cycle of life and death. This is the ultimate goal of human life. By attaining the human body, he can experience the beauty of God through penance. By undergoing transmigration, i.e. vale of sufferings, the *jeeva* assumes different forms and is bereft of the divine cosmic spirit and eternal peace.

Theoretical Understanding

The person who experiences the beauty of God sees the essence of God in heaven, the abode of the deceased ancestors, *Gandharva loka* and all else. In the *Brahma loka* one can very distinctly see the difference between the *jeeva* (unredeemed soul) and the supreme god as sunlight and shade.

An intelligent person realizes the ultimate truth in all three states and says "I am not the body, the mind, the intellect and senses", and that all of them are finally one element. By reflecting in the manner, he is freed from the shackles of sorrow and grief.

The mind is greater than the senses; the intellect is greater than the mind and the unredeemed soul is greater than the intellect. Nature is even greater than the unredeemed soul. The supreme god is greater than Nature or *prakriti* and is all-pervasive. In this way, the person who practises spirituality engages in similar contemplation.

The divine form of the supreme god cannot be experienced by the senses (*jnana*). The person who contemplates and meditates upon the supreme god with indomitable faith and pure love experiences the beauty of God. God comes and resides in the heart of such a person. He gets a vision of the supreme god. As a result, he attains divinity and godhood.

Contemplation of God by *Yoga*

When all the senses become stable and calm due to practice of *yoga*, one does not see anything other than God and divinity. In this state, the impulses of the mind tend to cease and this is itself the most divine state. The process of making the mind, senses and intellect stable and calm is *yoga*. Such a person who practises *yoga* is devoid of any dereliction and negligence. But this *yoga* is something that rises and sets. Hence, it is in the best interest of those who are desirous of attaining God to assiduously practicse *yoga* incessantly.

Although the experience of divinity is beyond the flight of the senses, the experience of godhood can be had by those who seek divinity with perseverance. Hence, we should yearn to achieve godhood with firm conviction and diligence.

The Significance of Selfishness

The human mind is full of material and celestial desires. Due to these desires, he cannot aspire to attain godhood. The material desires are a big impediment in attaining godhood.

When all desires cease to exist, the person is freed from all the shackles of life and death; he merges into that repository of divinity and salvation, i.e. God.

With the subduing of all senses, all ignorance and suspicion is destroyed. He becomes confident that he shall definitely attain God. In this human body itself, he experiences God and attains godhood.

The Ultimate State of the *Jeevatma*

There are a hundred and one prime nerves in the heart which are spread throughout the body. One of them is *Sushmna Nadi* (nerve) which extends from the heart to the head. Those virtuous people who are desirous of attaining God, come out of their body through this nerve and eventually attain immortality and godhood. Other people come out of their body through other nerves and take birth in different *yonis* according to their actions, desires and deeds.

Conclusion

This is the spiritual discourse given by Yamaraja, to Nachiketa. He was devoid of all flaws, demerits and finally experienced the beauty of God.

The person who practises spirituality like Nachiketa and has indomitable faith and devotion will attain godhood and shall be freed from the nebulous and diabolic cycle of life and death.

Chapter Eight

Kenopanishad

The *Kena Upanishad* derives its name from the first word *Kena*, taken from the *Sama Veda*. It is also known as the *Talavakara,* the name of the *Brahmana* of the *Sama Veda* to which the *Upanishad* belongs.

It has four sections, the first two in verse and the other two in prose. The metrical portion deals with the supreme unqualified *brahman,* the absolute principle underlying the world of phenomenon and the prose part of the *Upanishad* deals with God, *Isvara*. The knowledge of the Absolute, para *vidya,* which secures immediate liberation (*sadyo-mukti*) is possible only for those who are able to withdraw their thoughts from worldly objects and concentrate on the ultimate fact of the universe. The knowledge of *Isvara, apara vidya,* puts one on the pathway that leads to deliverance eventually (*karma-mukti*). The worshipping soul gradually acquires the higher wisdom which results in the consciousness of the identity with the supreme god.

Introduction

The *Kenopanishad* is a section of *Talavakara Brahmana* of the *Sama Veda*. The first word of the *Upanishad* is *Kena,* therefore the name of the *Upanishad* is *Kenopanishad*. This is the ninth chapter of the *Talavakara Brahmana*. The main topic covered in this *Upanishad* is the 'supreme divine cosmic energy which is very profound and difficult to follow. Therefore, it is explained in the form of a conversation between a teacher and his disciple.

Peace Invocation

Aum Aapyaayantu Mamaangani Vaak
Pranashchakshuhu
Kshotra Matho Bala Indriyani Cha Sarvani |
Sarvam Brahmaupanishadam Brahma Nirakuryam
Ma Ma Brahma Nirakarod Anirakaran Astva
Nirakaranam Me Astu | *Tad Aatmani Niratee*
Ya Upanishatsu Dharamaste
Mayi Santu, Te Mayi Santu |
Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti Shanti!

The scholars and the knowledgeable pray to God so that there are no obstacles in the process of realization—O Embodiment of Divine knowledge! May all my senses, my organs, hands, legs, eyes, mind, intellect, *prana*, mental and physical energy be nourished and blessed.

May I reconcile to the form of Brahma and may even Parabrahma never neglect me. May our relation be enhanced and nurtured. May I be always embellished with the *Dharma Samuha* narrated in the *Upanishads*. May I be emancipated from worries or flaws, i.e. *Ashibhautik, Adhidaivik* and *Adhyatmik*.

The Curiosity of a Disciple

The curious disciple asks his teacher—O Revered Guru! Who inspires and makes the soul, the *prana*, the hands, legs, mouth, eyes, mind, intellect, etc. capable of performing their duties? Who is that divine cosmic energy? How is it in form?

The *Acharya Guru* (principal teacher) of *Upanishad* explains to his disciple in a symbolic fashion.

The Guru's answer—It is Brahma who inspires and activates all the senses, the *prana* and the innate energies present. He is the cause of the *prana*, the mind and literally the entire universe. Scholars realize this divine cosmic soul and get salvation.

We cannot realize the divine soul through our senses. Even the mind cannot reach up to him. It is a concept which is celestial and divine that is why it is unreachable by any instrument or means. It is unlike the animate and inanimate and it transcends speech, the mind and intellect. The only thing that can be said is that it inspires speech, the intellect, senses and the mind. It is the inceptor and the nourisher. It is Brahma. The senses and the mind can only perceive worldly objects and concrete impulses, which is why the senses, mind and intellect can never understand the real essence of the divine cosmic soul. As these things, senses, etc. are not instrumental in realization of Brahma, they are not sublime or divine. Hence, the form of the divine cosmic soul has been explained in symbolic language which transcends the mind and intellect.

He is *Parabrahma* who is omniscient, lord, the inspirer, the enforcer, almighty, unnatural, omnipresent and is the divine element embodied.

Second Chapter

Caution in Realization of Divine Knowledge

The Guru cautions the disciple and says, "If you consider that you have understood in totality the form of *Parabrahma*, just the way I explained it to you now, it would be thoroughly inappropriate." The reason: the disciple has hardly experienced anything hitherto. *Parabrahma* is not that intelligible; it has pervaded everything, rather, every atom of the cosmos including the *jeevatma*. Despite this, it is evinced only in a fraction. That is why you have to continually contemplate on the form of *Brahma Tatva*.

The Uniqueness of the Supreme Knowledge

On being cautioned by the Guru, the statement of the disciple is appropriate. The curious disciple states, "The two statements," I know Brahma and 'I do not know Brahma are simply inappropriate and contradictory because Brahma is himself knowledgeable and is beyond understanding. Therefore, divine knowledge can only be experienced, not expressed. It is not possible to understand, make others understand and to say something about it.

Those who realize the divine knowledge do not in the least have ego about their knowledge. People absorbed in divinity feel that God Himself knows us. There is no one who can take us across. *Brahma Jnana* is not something to know and keep. It is wrong and illogical to say 'I am knowledgeable'. There is no instrument or means that can be instrumental in realization of the divine truth; therefore, for the curious, Brahma is always unknown.

The energy one is endowed with to realize God is in reality bestowed by God upon man. Human birth is hard to get and the person who indulges in everything but in realization of divine knowledge is committing an incorrigible folly. The Shrutis say, 'Until this human body is existing, until all the things required for realization are being made available by divine blessings, one should, as soon as possible realize the eternal divine truth so that it accrues in the well-being of all. If one loses this opportunity it will be unfortunate.'

We will again have to undergo a vale of sufferings that shall unrelentingly defy a solution other than repentance. Unlike human life, the other births are merely for bearing the fruits of actions performed. There is no method to liberate oneself in other births. Hence, we should avail of this opportunity and use this time in the quest for divine knowledge and truth. Knowledge, devotion and actions are the three ways which shall accrue in the welfare of all. This alone shall result in realization of the real essence of life and in the potentials of the intellect.

It is explained in the third chapter along with examples that it is the glory and greatness of the fraction of that *Parabrahma* that is evident in the beauty, love and the might of a person or anything in this world.

It is because of divine grace that the gods were successful in defeating and subduing the demons. The real victors were not gods but the divine cosmic energy. But the gods felt proud of their achievements and started to feel that they were the undefeatable and invincible. When the supreme soul realized this, he assumed the form of a *yaksha* in order to teach the gods a lesson for if he didn't, the gods would remain proud and end up in misery and ruin. This was also the divine play of the supreme god that the gods would not even recognize Him.

The Acid Test of Yaksha by Agni

Indra sent Agni Deva to Yaksha so that he could recognize who he was. Agni is very radiant and is knowledgeable about all the *Vedas,* is the one who is aware of all things produced. That is why he is referred to as *Jata Veda*. Therefore, all the gods found Agni appropriate and sent him first.

Agni had an ego about the knowledge he possessed. He came and tried to understand who Yaksha was. Yaksha asked him, "Who are you?" Agni thought, "All know me. How did he not recognize me?" He vehemently said: "I am Agni. I am the only one known as *Jata Veda*".

Yaksha asked, " What are your capabilities?" Agni said: "I can incinerate the entire universe into ashes." On this Yaksha lifted a blade of grass and told Agni to incinerate it. Agni tried hard to incinerate the blade of grass but in vain. At last he felt ashamed and returned. He told all the other gods that he could not understand who Yaksha was.

The Acid Test of Yaksha by Vayu Deva

After the ignominious defeat of Agni, it was now the turn of Vayu Deva to go and understand who Yaksha was. When Vayu Deva came near Yaksha, Yaksha asked, "Who are you? What are you capable of?" On this Vayu Deva said "I can make the entire world fly and remain afloat in air, I am Vayudeva." Yaksha told Vayu Deva to keep a blade of grass afloat in air. But despite all efforts, Vayu Deva could not do so. Feeling ashamed, Vayu Deva too went back. He told all the gods that he also had not been successful in recognizing Yaksha.

The Acid Test of Yaksha by Indra

When Agni and Vayu Deva returned as failures, all the gods selected Indra to go and recognize Yaksha.

Compared with other gods, Indra was a big egoist. Yaksha did not even talk to Indra. But other than this foible, Indra was the right person so that divine energy merged into itself and vanished.

Indra Sees Uma

Even after Yaksha vanished, Indra stood there bewildered and absorbed in thought. Suddenly, he saw the beautiful daughter of Himalaya, Uma approaching him. Indra asked out of devotion, "O Goddess! Would you please tell me who Yaksha, you just saw, was? And what was he here for?"

The supreme god, in reality sent Parvati who was omniscient, to enlighten Indra.

The Introduction of Supreme God by Goddess Parvati

When Devendra asked Uma who Yaksha was, Uma replied, "That divine being who had disguised himself as Yaksha was the supreme cosmic soul. It is his blessings with the aid of which you could vanquish the *asuras*. To destroy your ego that resulted thereof, the lord manifested himself as Yaksha. Without his blessings, nothing in this world is possible to accomplish or attain."

Characteristics of Those Who Realize the Supreme God

Amongst all the other gods, only Agni, Vayu and Indra are considered great as only these three realized supreme divinity to some extent. It was these three gods who got the opportunity to converse with the supreme god.

Amongst these three, Indra is the greatest because the supreme god blessed Indra and as a result, Goddess Uma came to the help of Indra and divulged the secret of *Parabrahma*. Only after this did the rest of the gods realize the ultimate truth.

The Sermon of Evil to Realize the Supreme God

When a desire to realize the supreme God stems in the heart of a devotee, the supreme god infuses more of impatience in such a person's heart and shows his forms at the spur of the moment like lightning and then elopes. Similarly, the supreme god expressed his divinity for a short moment of time before Indra and vanished. It is after this that a desire to know supreme divinity took birth in Indra's heart and the same was fulfilled too. In this way, divinity emerges by understanding the divine soul through symbolism.

Spiritual Sermons

When a devotee approaches God, he keeps remembering the form of God that is either *saguna* (full of merit) or *nirguna* (devoid of merits). At that time, the love towards God becomes all the more strong and he cannot bear a second's estrangement from God. He becomes anxious and impatient.

The Benefit of Worshipping Brahma

The embodiment of divine happiness is dear to one and all. All humans one way or the other like Him, but unfortunately cannot recognize Him. In the effort to gain happiness they engage in all things that garner unhappiness because of delusion.

Therefore, a devotee should consider God as the benefactor and well wisher of all and should always concentrate on the all pervasive form of God. By practising accordingly, one can unquestionably attain God and dwell in eternal happiness.

The Guru tells his disciple that this valuable advice is undoubtedly the secretive advice of *Brahma Vidya* (knowledge of divinity).

The Means to Attain Divine Knowledge

The Guru tells his disciple that knowledge of divinity is the foundation of the palace of liberation. The other materials are penance, control of senses and adhering to one's duty with industry.

He who controls his mind and senses and works selflessly attains divinity. All the aspects of knowledge (divine) are eventually the *Vedas*. It is the *Vedas* that speak of all the spheres of divine knowledge. We should therefore study all the spheres to realize the eternal truth.

Only they attain *Brahma Vidya,* who engage in penance, austerities as told in the *Vedas* and perform their actions selflessly. The person who does so is emancipated from all sins and he attains the highest state of bliss. He never returns from there and becomes liberated and immortal.

Chapter Nine

Chandogya Upanishad

Chandogya Upanishad belongs to the *Sama Veda*. Chandoga is the singer of the Saman (1). The *Upanishads* that belong to the followers of the *Sama Veda* is the *Chandogya Upanishad*. It is part of the *Chandogya Brahmana* which has ten chapters. The first two chapters of the *Brahmana* deal with sacrifices and other forms of worships. The other eight constitutes the *Chandogya Upanishad*.

The first and the second chapters discuss the problems of liturgy and doctrine such as the genesis and significance of *Aum* and the meaning and names of Saman.

Introduction

The *Chandogya Upanishad* is an integral part of the *Tavalkara Brahmana* of the *Sama Veda*. The *Kenopanishad* also belongs to the *Tavalkara Brahmana*. Therefore, the peace invocation for both of them is one. The method of narration is very methodical and witty. It includes the comprehensive description of the divine knowledge, the allied useful deeds and propitiation. This *Upanishad* comprises eight chapters in which the first five chapters deal with worship and propitiation and the last three deal with the analysis of knowledge.

The Synopsis of *Chandogya Upanishad*

One sees the beautiful analysis of worship and knowledge in the *Chandogya Upanishad*. To facilitate understanding, some stories have also been narrated when necessary. The first chapter speaks of Ushasti who would stay in Ibhyagrama. Ushasti was very adroit and conversant with the different rituals. Once upon a time, there was a famine in the region of Kuru where Ushasti was staying. There was rain of stones and hail due to which people had to live without food. When the situation worsened further, the people went to a mahout and asked for some food. He had some leftover horse grams, which he was hesitating to give away. But Ushasti took it from him saying "it is left over" and told him not to take it.

When the mahout expressed his doubt "Won't you be cursed with the sin of eating leftover food?" Ushasti said: "I can stay alive without eating this. I can get water wherever and whenever I want. I do not recommend drinking of leftover water." In this way, he advised that a person can neglect or overlook the codes of conduct only when there is a question of survival or when one's life is at stake.

The conversation between Shilak, Chaikitayan and Pravahana encompasses the entire first chapter. The fifth chapter speaks of the curiosity of the ancient Maharshis like Shaal that brought them to the court of King Ashwapati to ask him about the *Vaishwanar atma*. One thing is clear from all these incidents that the Brahmins are the only people authorized to give sermons according to the eternal code of conduct for disciples, but if there is some nobler type of knowledge possessed by someone else, one can seek his tutelage. The stories of the Aranyakas exhibit the fact how much penance, austerities, service one has to practise and how much humility and truthfulness one needs to imbibe the auspicious knowledge.

King Janashruti bore the humiliation by the charioteer named Raekva just to imbibe the knowledge of Samvarga, which he possessed. But the king had to pay a price for knowledge by giving the charioteer his daughter, wealth and his empire. Indra practised celibacy for a hundred and one years to realize the cosmic spirit. When Satyakarma Jaabal requested his Guru Haridrumata Gautam to perform the thread ceremony, he (Guru) asked him his *gotra* (lineage). Jaabal replied that he was ignorant about it. Seeing the truthfulness of Jaabal, the Guru was assured that Jaabal was a Brahmin and performed his thread ceremony.

Jaabal acquired the knowledge of divinity through his service to his Guru. After performing the thread ceremony of Satyakarma Jaabal, Acharya Haridrubhat asked him to take his four hundred cows to the jungle for grazing. He also told Jaabal not to bring them until their number had grown to one thousand.

Jaabal obeyed his Guru's commands with total devotion. By just taking the cows to graze, he acquired the divine cosmic knowledge. When he returned with the cows, he was so radiant and brilliant that even his Guru said: "O Saumya! You seem to be the realized one. Who has given you the sermons?"

Similarly, Upakoshala, the disciple of Jaabal, acquired divine knowledge by merely performing the religious rites in a sacrifice.

The seventh chapter contains the conversation between Sanat Kumar and Narad. Out of curiosity of divine knowledge, Devarishi Narad comes under the tutelage of Sanat Kumar. Sanat Kumar asked: "Tell me, what knowledge you are appraised of? After this I shall advice you." Narad replied: "I know all the four *Vedas*, History, *Puranas* (*Pancham Veda*), Grammar, Shraddha Kalpa, Mathematics, Utpaat Jnana, Nidhi Shastra, Logic, Neeti Shaastra, Nirukta, Shiksha, Bhuta Tantra, Archery, Astrology, Garuda, Music, etc."

Despite having such vast knowledge, Narad was dissatisfied. His condition was like a king who had all the pleasures unimaginable but because of some terrible ailment or pain, he wasn't satisfied.

Hence, curious Narad said: "O Lord! I am just well versed with the scriptures but I have not realized the soul. I have heard that the realization transcends all unhappiness. I am unhappy. Kindly help me to transcend all these miseries. I am assured that a person cannot transcend the ocean of misery just by being conversant with the scriptures."

In this way, there are many useful things in the *Chandogya Upanishad*. Maximum *sutras*, which are explained in the *Vedanta Sutras*, are extracted from this *Upanishad*. The *Jnana Kanda* is an infinite treasury for the curious. The great statement 'Tatvamasi' is the prime instrument of the Advaita school of philosophy which features in the sixth chapter of this *Upanishad*. Aruni has explained to his son Shwetaketu, the secret of self-realization using this statement nine times in nine different examples.

The ultimate aim of the 'soul' is happiness, divine, eternal happiness which is the knowledge of the self. The Shruti concludes by directing us towards the ultimate attainment of the human body and inspires us to do so.

Peace Invocation

Aum Aapyayantu Mamangaani ।
Vakprana Chakshuhu Shrotra
Matho Balam Indriyaani Cha Sarvaani ।
Sarva Brahmaupanishadam Maham
Brahma Nirakuryam
Ma Ma Brahma Nira Karodanira Karana-
Mastva Nirakaranam Me Astu ।
Tadaatmani Niryate Ya Upanishastu
Dharmaste Mayi Santu Te Mayi Santu ।
Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

The first part of *Chandogya Upanishad's* speaks of the propitiation of the *Omkar* through the 'Udgeetha' point of view. The topics covered are the beautiful elements of Udgeetha, the description of Udgeetha of 'Rig' and 'Sama' in the worship of Udgeetha, the fruit of the worship of Udgeetha, etc.

The Propitiation of Omkar from Udgeetha's Point of View

Aum. This word, says the Shruti, is the Udgeetha. The person who recites *Aum* or *Om* in the *yagya* and thereafter starts the 'Saamagaana'. This is the propitiation of Udgeetha.

Aum is the closest synonym of the supreme god. One experiences happiness by using and reciting this word often just like happiness experienced by the common man by reciting the name of the beloved. Though it is synonymous with the supreme god, the *Aumkar* is expressed in the word form only and eventually it represents itself as the symbol of God. Reciting *Aum* is the best way for propitiation of the supreme god.

The word *Aum* is an integral part of the Udgeetha Bhakti and is represented as 'Udgeetha'. That is why one should with total concentration and devotion supplicate the *Aumkar* by Udgeetha who is the part of *karma* (action).

A *stotra* of the *Sama Veda* is referred to as Udgeetha. *Aumkar* is the fraction of it.

The Benefit of the Propitiation of *Aumkar*

That person who propitiates the Udgeetha form word *Aumkar* attains all what he desires. The Shruti states: "He becomes all that he worships and supplicates".

The Property/Quality of *Aumkar*

Aumkar is embellished with the merit of prosperity as it is a word that hints towards experiences. It is just as when we approve a particular thing said by someone by saying 'Hmm' (*Aum*).

He who realizes the Udgeetha in this form and propitiates it attains all that he desires. Approval itself is prosperity. A person who is prosperous only can approve by saying 'Aum'. This shows that *Aum* is embellished by the property of prosperity.

As he who realizes the Udgeetha *akshar* (word) becomes the worshipper of that thing that is embellished with quality of prosperity and fulfills all the desires of the person.

The Praises of *Aumkar*

The Trayi Vidya of *Rig Veda, Sama Veda* and *Yaju Veda* emerges from the word *Aumkar*. By reciting *Aum*, the *Adhvaryu* (one of the Brahmins of the *Yajur Veda*) performs his duty. The Udgeetha starts songs first by reciting *Aum*. The entire Vedic rituals are created for propitiation of this Divine word. For the initiation of action, the juice of wheat and barley is presented as the oblation for its greatness.

The allied actions of the *Rig Veda,* etc. are also for supplication of the divine word. The propitiation of '*Aumkar*' is done by the prana of 'Ritvija' and 'Yajamana' and recitation of the divine word.

That person who propitiates the *Aumkar* in that aforesaid manner and worships the *Akshar Brahma,* merges with the immortal divine element and is liberated. He becomes immortal just like the gods.

The Glory of Udgeetha which Represents the Sky and Its Benefits

To exhibit the greatness of the propitiation of Udgeetha, the conversation between Shilak, Dalabhya and Pravahana is narrated.

Seeking the approval of Pravahana, Shilak said to Dalabhya: "The ultimate state of this world is the sky (space). The word sky (space) is synonymous with God. All humans take birth from that sky (space). Everything finds its end in the space. The space is the refuge of each and everything. This Udgeetha which represents the supreme god is the noblest of all.

That scholar who realizes that Udgeetha and propitiates the supreme god, *Aum* attains good *lokas* or states.

The son of Shaunak, Atidhanva explained it as the 'stomach of Shandilya' and said: "My descendants will know this Udgeetha from my children and until then life on this earth will ameliorate and improve gradually. Even in heaven they shall attain good state and *lokas*.

That person who propitiates Udgeetha in form of the sky or space, his life becomes nobler and sublime and in a state of bliss, he attains better *lokas* or states."

The Anecdote of Ushasti

The ten parts of the first chapter narrate the anecdote of Ushasti. During the famine, Ushasti took a handful of left over horse grams from a mahout to save his life. He did not drink the leftover water as potable water was available. Ushasti with the desire of becoming *Ritwij* went to the religious sacrifice organized by the king.

At the ceremony, he criticized the presentator and the Udgeetha (one who recites) that if without knowing the gods, they invoke them, they will immediately meet their death. At this, the king welcomed Ushasti and entrusted the work of *Ritwij*.

He answered the questions one by one put forward by the Udgeetha and the presentator.

The God of *Prana* that Lies in Invocation

The *prastotra* asked Ushasti with the emotion of a disciple: "Who is that god who lies in the invocation." Ushasti replied: "That God is the *prana* (breath) as he pervades all the humans. He takes birth from all the *prana*. All the creatures static and dynamic at the time of final dissolution end in *prana*. At time of evolution the human being is created from that *prana*. So, it is this God of *prana* that lies in the introduction. If you invoke God without realization, your head would be decapitated. On my prohibition, you did not do that deed, otherwise you would have met your death."

Aditya is God according to Udgeetha

The Udgeetha asked Ushasti with humility and devotion: "Lord! Who is the god concerned with Udgeetha." At this, Ushasti said: "That God is Aditya. All humans sing the praises of that Aditya who has risen. That Aditya is the one concerned with the Udgeetha."

Food is the God Concerned with Protection

The *pratiharta* asked Ushasti: "O Lord! Who is the God concerned with protection and preservation?" Ushasti said: "That God is food. All the humans exist and sustain on food. Hence, food is the sole preserver of human life on this *loka*."

In this way, the synopsis of the Shruti says that we should propitiate the invocation, the Udgeetha and *Pratihar* (preserver) with the *prana*, Aditya and the *anna* (food).

The benefit is the tangibility of the *prana* and the prosperity of work (*karma*).

Second Chapter

The Propitiation of the Sama According to the Saints

The second chapter narrates the worship of all the Samas through the Shrutis. The first chapter speaks of the propitiation of the eleven organs of the body and the second chapter deals with the gods of the eleven organs. Shruti says: "The propitiation of all the Samas is good and sublime. That which is sublime is known as Sama. An example is cited to explain the same. When it is said a particular person went to the king via the Sama, it means that he has become noble and sublime.

On the contrary if one comes with the 'Asama' it means that he has come with an inferior motive or is considered mean.'

It is also said, that 'Our Sama is done' which means that auspicious work is accomplished. When it is auspicious, it is considered good and when it is inauspicious, it is considered as bad. In this way, the one solitary meaning of Sama, Sadhu and Shubha is delineated.

That person who realizes (known as Samasadhu) this and worships in turn is embellished with all the good qualities and becomes humble.

Third Chapter

After narrating the different types of propitiation of the Sama, the Shruti speaks about the fruit of the *yagya* as the embodiment of the Sun. It is one thing that can bestow upon us the greatest of all things amongst all the four attainments.

Madhu Vidya (Knowledge of Nectar)

Aditya is unequivocally the nectar of the Gods. The sky itself is the horizontal bars on which it is suspended. The space is the 'umbrella' or 'parapet' and the rays are the 'small mosquitoes' staying in it.

As Aditya pleases all the Gods and is beloved, he is really the nectar. When all the food, fluids, juices cease to exist, this Aditya merges in the supreme god and becomes one. He attains Brahma *loka*. In the Brahma *loka*, the Sun neither rises nor sets. He who realizes the *Veda* in form of the *Madhu Vidya*, the Sun never sets for him. That Aditya becomes the unborn supreme god who neither rises nor sets.

Shandilya Vidya (Knowledge Bestowed by Shandilya)

The Shruti speaks of that supreme divine god who is embellished with three feet, infinite qualities and insurmountable powers and who can be propitiated in different forms. This entire universe is definitely Brahma. The universe takes birth and finally dissolutes in that Brahma. All actions and deeds take place in that Brahma. Hence, one ought to worship God without desire or hatred. The *purush* is embellished with *yagya* and is definite. *Purush* is definite and also attains death.

The Total Brahma Embellished with the Qualities

How should the soul (*purush*) decide? The Shruti comments on this—that Brahma is *manomaya* (pervaded in the mind), the *prana* is the body, embodiment of divine light, a truthful resolution, the sky is the body, *sarvakarma* (one who accomplishes all deeds), *sarvakama* (one who satisfies and exhausts all desires), *sarvagandha* (embodiment of all fragrances) and *sarvarasa* (embodiment of all juices/tastes).

He is the one who encompasses the entire universe, devoid of speech and dilemma.

Brahma is the Biggest and the Minutest

The Shrutis says: "The soul which resides in the heart is smaller than mustard and food and is bigger than the space, the sky and the other *lokas*. This soul is all-pervasive and is in every atom and molecule of this world.

He who decides in this way that he shall attain the supreme god after death attains bliss undoubtedly. This is said by Shandilya. Shandilya Rishi says: "Those people who are the principal teachers of the knowledge of propitiation and that scholar who takes a resolution definitely attains godhood".

Chapter Ten

Mandukyopanishad

Mandukyopanishad is the kernel of the *Vedanta*; it is the most profound among all the *Upanishads*; having the distinction of being recommended as, by itself, enough to lead man to salvation. It is very brief, consisting of just a dozen mantras! These are divided into four sections, Agama, Vaithathya, Adwaitha and Alathasanthi. In the Agamaprakarana, the secret doctrine of *Pranava* which is the key to self-realisation is expounded. In the second, *Prakatana*, the doctrine of Dualism, the great obstacle to liberation is discussed and rebutted. In the third, the Advaita or non-dual Unity is propounded. The last i.e., *Prakarana* describes certain mutually contradictory non-Vedic doctrines and rejects them.

Peace Invocation

Aum Bhadram Karnebhihi Shrunuyaama Deva
Bhadram Pashyemaksha Bhirya Jatraha |
Sthirai Rangaisthustuvasatanubhihi
Vyasheema Devagitam Vadaayuhu | |
Swasti Na Indro Vriddhashrava Swasti
Na Pusha Vishwavedha |
Swasti Nastarkshyo Arishta Nemihi Swasti
Nobhrihaspatirdhaatu | |
Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

The Greatness of Omkar

Aum is the name of the divine cosmic spirit. It is not separate or different from the supreme god. The word Aum itself is total divinity manifested, invincible supreme god. This palpable world is an expression of that divinity. That minute and concrete world that took birth and ceased that which is present and which is going to take birth is all 'Omkar'.

Those people who consider the cosmic divine soul formless or with a form or devoid of merits, understand only one fragment of God. The divine cosmic element has a form as well as formless and is simultaneously both. The entire world is His manifestation but He is also different from it. He is embellished with merits and at the same time surprisingly devoid of merits. Thus, this world, this cosmos and every molecule is embellished with divinity. Therefore, to understand this divine form, the Shrutis have imagined four *padas* or steps.

The First Dimension—Brahma *Vaishvanara*

The physical body in a conscious state enjoys all pleasures with seven organs, ten senses, five *pranas*, four mind (states) that is in all nineteen mouths and whose knowledge is spread in this external world. Similarly, the soul of the body that enjoys all pleasures with all nineteen mouths as said before is *Vaishvanara*. This is the first dimension of that divine cosmic spirit.

Second Dimension—*Hiranyagarbha*

Just like one who enjoys all the minute pleasures with seven organs and nineteen mouths and whose knowledge is spread in its purview, similarly the seven worlds reside in that minute form that is the body, along with the aforesaid nineteen mouths which is known as *Hiranyagarbha*.

It regulates all the elements that make up that minute world, is knowledgeable and has everything within itself. This effulgent *Hiranyagarbha* is the second dimension of the divine cosmic spirit.

Third Dimension—*Pragya*

A person in a sleeping state does not desire anything and is devoid of experiences and neither does he dream. This state is called *sushupti* (unconsciousness) and resembles a state created during the final dissolution of the world in which different forms come into existence, whose body is invariable and immutable in nature, who is second to none, whose state of consciousness itself is the mouth, whose food is eternal happiness and whose wealth is itself knowledge. This is *Pragya,* embellished with total happiness and it is the third dimension of the divine Cosmic spirit.

The Fourth Dimension—*Advaita*

The formless, meritless form of the supreme god is the fourth dimension of the divine eternal cosmic spirit.

Whose knowledge is neither within nor outside, who is unintelligible, inaccessible, invisible, devoid of organs, merits, qualities, devoid of physicality and materialism, that itself is the embodiment of the divine cosmic element. This calm, altruistic and superior element is *Advaita* the fourth dimension of that divine cosmic spirit.

Oneness of the Supreme Soul and Omkar

The four-dimensional supreme god in *Akshar Prakarana* assumes three syllables and becomes *Omkar*. 'A', 'U' and

'M' are the three dimensions of God. Just as *Omkar* is never devoid of three syllables, the supreme god also is not devoid of its dimensions.

The first syllable 'A' comprises all the titles of this world. The divine cosmic element in the form of Vaishvanara pervades this physical world which is the gigantic body of the same. As He himself took form in this gigantic body, He was also present at the time of evolution of the universe. Hence 'A' is the first element of the divine cosmic soul.

He who knows the oneness of this *akaar* and the soul with the gigantic body (supreme god) and propitiates that form regularly attains all what he desires.

The second syllable of *omkar* is *ukaar*. As it is situated between 'A' and 'M' it is the 'dual' form. Thus, the effulgent Hiranyagarbha is better than Vaishvanar. This is the third dimension of the cosmic spirit.

He who understands the oneness of *ukaar* and the radiant Hiranyagarbha attains neutrality and equipoise.

The third syllable of that *omkar* is *makaar*. It has evolved from the etymological element *maa* and is after the *ukaar*. That means both the elements 'A', 'U' finally merge into 'M'. In this way the creator of this world *pragya* is also the omniscient, in spite of being the cause of unconsciousness.

As there is oneness between the *makaar* and the *Pragya, makaar* becomes the fourth dimension of the cosmic spirit.

He who understands all this realizes the fundamental cause behind this universe. Such a person is liberated, is devoid of a body and the physical world.

'As this divine cosmic spirit is undecipherable, formless, devoid of merit and cannot be explained or described in words, this form assumes the fourth dimension. He who has a burning desire to attain divinity and who continually recites the name of the almighty and practises penance undoubtedly merges into the supreme cosmic spirit. This proves the greatness of reciting God's name, which can eventually facilitate the realization of divinity.

Chapter Eleven

Mundakopanishad

The *Mundaka Upanishad* belongs to the *Atharva Veda* and has three chapters, each of which has two sections. The name is derived from the root *mund*, meaning 'to shave', as he that comprehends the teaching of the *Upanishad* is shaved or liberated from error and ignorance. The *Upanishad* states clearly the distinction between the higher knowledge of the supreme *Brahman* and the lower knowledge of the empirical world. It is by this higher wisdom and not by sacrifices or worship that one can reach *Brahman*. Only a *sanyasin* who has given up everything can obtain the highest knowledge.

Introduction

This *Upanishad* is an integral part of the Shaunak branch of *Atharva Veda*. Like *Kathopanishad*, one sees the explanation of the divine cosmic soul in the *Mundakopanishad*. In this *Upanishad*, curious Shaunak Rishi went to Angira Rishi to acquire the divine knowledge.

Peace Invocation

Aum Bhadram Karnebhihi Shrunayam Deva
Bhadram Pashyeaksha Atrahaa |
Sthirai Rangaitushtuvasansatnubhihi
Vyasheem Devhitam Yadayuhu |
Swasti No Indro Vriddhashravaha Swasti

Na Pushaa Vishwa Veedaahaa ।
Swasti Nastarkshyo Aristanemihi Swasti
No Brihaspatirda Dhatu ।

Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

First Mukunda—First Chapter

Tradition of the Process of Self-realization

Lord Brahma was the first to emerge from the almighty divine cosmic soul. After this, the divine soul gave birth to all the other gods, Maharshis, Marichi, Prajapati and finally created all the worlds (*lokas*) and the rules to protect them. The eldest son of Lord Brahma was Atharva to whom Brahma gave the first sermon of the knowledge of divinity. Atharva Rishi passed on that knowledge to Agni, who in turn passed it on to Satyavaha Rishi. It is in this tradition that Bharadwaj Rishi handed down this knowledge to Angira Rishi. After this, Angira Rishi gave the knowledge of divinity to the humble Shaunak Muni.

Questions of Shaunak

Shaunak Muni was the headman of clan. He tried to study the knowledge of divinity. He came to Angira Rishi and asked with faith and devotion, "O Revered One! What is that divine element by which one knows everything which is animate and inanimate? How can one realize the divine element?"

Sermons by Angira Rishi

Angira Rishi replied: "Shaunak! To realize divinity, human beings need to know two types of knowledge that is *paraa* and *aparaa*. That is called *Paraa Vidya* where there is knowledge of the impeccable infinite, all-pervasive divine cosmic soul. The *Vedas* comprise of the descriptions of the aforesaid things. Leaving that portion of the *Vedas* and the *Vedangas*, they all come under *Aparaa Vidya*.

That is *Aparaa Vidya* which speaks about the pleasures of the material world and heaven and the ways to attain them. The *Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda* and the six *angas* of *Veda, i.e., shiksha, kalpa, vyakrana, nirukta, jyotish* and *chhanda* come under *Aparaa Vidya*.

Description of the Formless Divine Soul

We cannot understand God with the aid of the *Jnana Indriyas* (hands, legs, mouth). He is devoid of all titles, castes, communities, creed, colour, etc. He is in fact totally devoid of a form. He does not possess the senses or the mind. That divine cosmic soul is minute, comprehensive, situated within the recesses of the heart and is indestructible. He is the cause behind all the creatures. The scholars see him as omnipresent and all-pervasive.

The Process of the Evolution of the Universe

All the animate and inanimate things of this world take birth from that divine cosmic soul. It is the main and auxiliary cause for the creation of this universe. Just as a spider that creates a web out of the material that is predominantly there in its stomach and at the end gulps it down, the divine soul creates a plethora of all the animate and inanimate things and at the time of final dissolution, it is absorbed by the divine soul.

The seeds of medicines and food, grass, trees, creepers are predominantly present in the earth and they grow in favourable situations and climatic conditions. Earth has no bias towards any of these things. Similarly beings according to the seeds of actions, God creates human in different births.

During the evolution of the universe, the divine soul takes a resolution for the creation of this universe and by assuming the form of Brahma, he creates the *prana,* the mind, space (elements), creatures, their habitat, their actions, their good and bad fruits and similarly the entire universe.

This divine soul is omniscient and it is by His resolution that the universe is created by itself and all the creatures, their forms and food take birth automatically. By realizing the divine soul, one can realize everything.

Second Chapter

The Characteristics of *Aparaa Vidya* and its Benefits

For the people who desire material happiness and progress, great sages made some changes in the methods of performing *yagyas* and in the recitation of Vedic mantras. Hence, those people desirous of material prosperity should apprise themselves of the scriptural knowledge and follow it assiduously. This is the noblest path to divinity for the human body. It is not appropriate for humans to behave like animals and engage in sensual pleasures, ignorance, sleep and lethargy.

An authorized person should offer oblation to the fire enkindled in the *yagya* (sacrificial altar). He, along with the Agnihotra should perform the *yagya* like Darsha, Paunamaasa, Chaturmaasya. He should also perform the 'Balivaishwa Devakarma'. Doing so, he begets all the material pleasures in *Brahma loka*.

The tongue of Agni is embellished with seven types of flames. The person who offers oblation to the fire during the *yagya* reaches heaven via the rays of the Sun. A person who performs these eighteen types of *yagyas* properly, undoubtedly attains heaven. But it should always be remembered that if one is desirous of heaven and if there are some shortcomings in the performance of the *yagya*, the result is not heaven. Even heaven is not the ultimate form of happiness or bliss. Only fools praise the greatness of heaven and have to continually undergo the vicious cycle of life and death.

The Results of *Avidya*

People who are desirous and want to attain heaven, reside in *Avidya* but consider themselves to be intelligent. Such people undergo many sufferings. If a blind guides a blind then both of them end up nowhere and roam aimlessly. Such fools, who are desirous, roam aimlessly and do not attain the blissful state of divinity. They consider material happiness to be the noblest and do not even attempt to attain divinity selflessly.

The Result of *Vidya*

Unlike the desirous and materially-oriented people, those who tread on the path of righteousness selflessly are the intelligent people. Although they might be householders or the one who go to the forest to practise penance, these people with total restraint control their senses and strive to experience the beauty of the divine cosmic soul.

A person who wants to attain the state of divinity should refrain from material life. He should go to a Guru with faith, devotion and an earnest desire to know more about divinity. In this way, he should take sermons from the principled teacher.

The Duty of the Knowledgeable

Seeing a curious and devoted disciple, who is in search of divinity, the Guru should explain to him the ultimate knowledge through narration and analysis so that the disciple could understand the eternal knowledge of the divine cosmic soul which is indestructible.

Second Mundaka—First Chapter

The Sermon of *Vidya* by the Guru

Maharshi Angira says, "O Shaunak! I told you about the form of the divine cosmic soul in the previous Mundaka which is the truth in total. During the time of creation of the universe, one got many types of things, matter which were tangible, palpable just like the enkindled fire from which we get thousands of cinders which are a part of fire itself.

That divine soul is undoubtedly formless, devoid of flaws, is pure and chaste and is all-pervasive. He does not possess *prana* or senses. Despite being devoid of all this, He can do anything he pleases. During the time of evolution, the *prana*, the mind, all the senses, the space, air, water, etc., and all the elements simultaneously came into existence."

The God Possessing Form

The world is the gigantic form or expression of that intangible divine soul. In this gigantic form, the head of the divine soul is *Dyuloka*, the Moon and the Sun both are eyes, all the directions are his ears, the prosody and 'richas' of the *Vedas* are his speech, the air is *prana*, the animate and inanimate world is his heart and the earth is his feet. But the divine cosmic soul is present as the soul in every creature.

The Evolution of this Universe

The fire element first took birth from the divine cosmic soul. This Agni is enkindled continually in the form of the Sun. Agni gave birth to the Moon and the Moon in turn gave birth to the clouds. Due to rain, different types of herbs and medicines were created. When humans partake of medicines, semen is created and as a result progeny is created. In this way, this multifarious world or nature was created, the animate as well as the inanimate.

All the four *Vedas, yagyas* (religious sacrifices), years, time, took birth from that divine cosmic soul. Different types of gods such as Vasus and Rudras took birth from the cosmic spirit. It is out of these that different human beings, animals, birds and all other creatures took birth.

The life-giving *prana, apara* and the food for all the creatures and animals, etc. also has taken birth from the divine cosmic soul. Similarly, penance, faith, devotion, truth, celibacy, methods to perform *yagya* took birth from the cosmic spirit. The cause for everything in this world is the divine cosmic spirit.

Only he who realizes God, can break the wall of ignorance and delusion. He is the person who can liberate himself from all suspicion, delusion and attain union with the divine cosmic spirit.

Second Chapter

The Characteristics or Forms of God

The all-pervasive God is hidden in the recesses of the heart of every creature. All creatures and their like reside in that supreme god. He is the one and only worth supplicating to and understanding. He is the most noble one and is not decipherable or intelligent for the mere intellectual.

He is very minute and He alone is 'Akshar Brahma' (indestructible Brahma). He is the one who gives life to one and all.

The Metaphor of the Bow and the Arrow

To realize the supreme god, the metaphor of bow and arrow has been presented. On the weapon known as *Pranav,* which is described in the *Upanishads,* one needs to hold an arrow sharpened by propitiation and penance. After this with total faith and devotion, one should pull the string of the bow and by aiming perfectly at the supreme god, should shoot the arrow. Hence, one should practise reciting *Aum* for maximum duration with total concentration, faith and devotion. Doing so, the vibrations emanating from the *pranav* definitely reaches the supreme god. This is the best way to reach God.

The *pranav* which is synonymous with the supreme god is itself the bow, the living being itself is the arrow and the divine cosmic spirit is the aim. Only he who practises this assiduously attains divinity.

The Form of God

Everything stretching from heaven to the hearts and minds of all creatures is comprised of the divine cosmic spirit. It simultaneously includes all the senses, the mind, the intellect and everything intangible. Hence one should try to realize God by the aforesaid method. This is the bridge that shall lead to immortality. Due to that, the divine cosmic spirit regulates each and every action of each and every creature of this universe that is referred to as *Manomaya*. Intelligent people realize the divine spirit through special study and contemplations.

The Benefits of Realizing Divinity

When people realize the divine cosmic soul as a concept of cause and effect, all the impediments towards the realization cease automatically and all the skepticism goes. Similarly, all the things which we label as auspicious or inauspicious tend not to exist and finally, the living being is emancipated from this world and attains divinity.

Third Mundaka—First Chapter

The Position of the Living Being and the Cosmic Spirit

The human body is like a tree. The living being and the Cosmic spirit are two birds (friends) that stay among the branches of this tree. Amongst these two, one bird, the living being enjoys the fruits he begets out of his actions which are either good or bad. The other bird, divine spirit, does not attach himself to any of the actions or the fruits of the actions; he merely becomes the onlooker.

In this way, human being is attached with the fruits of *karma* and hence experiences a continual form of incompleteness. Whenever he realizes the divine knowledge, the universe with the help of the selfless God, he automatically becomes devoid of sorrow and pain.

Realization of the Supreme God

When a human being realizes the divine cosmic spirit, he destroys all the good deeds and all the sins together and becomes pure and chaste. He attains a state of balance and equipoise. He experiences the divinity of God in each and every creature but never talks big of himself as he knows that the divinity he possesses is merely a fraction of the expression of that divine cosmic soul.

He follows the orders of that divine cosmic spirit and performs all his *karmas* according to the *Varnashrams*. He plays and enjoys the beauty of divinity within himself. Such a knowledgeable devotee is really noble and great.

Means to Attain Realization

The divine cosmic spirit is the embodiment of truth. Truth is always victorious. Hence, to attain divinity, truth is an inevitable instrument. One should abstain from self-conceit, self-admiration, self-adulation and hypocrisy.

The divine cosmic spirit is celestial, divine and all-pervasive. One does not need to go anywhere to attain God.

A devotee whose heart is full of devotion, faith and full of knowledge alone can perceive God. People of inferior thinking cannot attain divinity. Those people who desire comforts, may attain all what they want if they serve a just and judicious person with a pure heart and devotion.

Second Chapter

Eulogy of Selflessness

A person who renounces all material pleasures attains divinity by concentrating on that radiant, effulgent embodiment of eternal truth, i.e. the supreme god. Such people emancipate themselves from the vicious cycle of life and death.

Criticism of Being Desirous

People who indulge in all sensual and material pleasures, take birth according to their actions. But those who love God become *Purnakama* (they who exhaust all their desires and become detached eventually); such people do not take birth again and again, but attain a state of bliss.

The Eulogy of the Devotees Who Love God

God cannot be realized by those who merely give good speeches or those who indulge in reasoning and display of knowledge or those who just listen to a lot of stories related to God.

People who want to attain bliss do not seek recourse to intellect; on the contrary, they wait for the divine inspiration and blessing. God blesses such people and emancipates them from *maya* (delusion). In this way, the earnest devotee can attain the supreme cosmic spirit.

The Greatness of the Person Who Realizes God

A person who realizes God, dwells in completeness and totality. He exhausts all his desires and becomes peaceful and calm. He attains divinity and merges into that cosmic element.

The Glory of Salvation

Those who contemplate and understand the *Vedanta Shastra* abandon all the desires, their heart and mind becomes an abode of divinity. At the moment of demise of such great souls, the body ceases to exist, while the soul merges with that divine cosmic element.

At the time of death, all the gods residing in the body go and assume their respective positions. They are in no way connected to the emancipated soul. After this the soul merges into divinity. Just like the rivers flow into the ocean and lose their entity and name, similarly that realized soul merges in that divine cosmic element that is like an ocean where no existence remains. Such a person realizes God and becomes free from all bondages.

Who can Realize the Cosmic Spirit

Those people, who perform actions according to their ability, *Varnashrama* and the situations and supplicate to the divine cosmic spirit those and who practice austerities, penance, uows, *yagyas*, etc. according to the scriptures, such a person is worthy of realizing the divine cosmic spirit.

Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

Chapter Twelve

Prashnopanishad

The *Prashna Upanishad* belongs to the *Atharva Veda* and has six sections dealing with six questions put to a sage by his disciples who were intent on knowing the nature of the ultimate cause, the power of *Aum*, the relation of the supreme god to the constituents of the world. The *Upanishad* is so-called as it deals with *prashna* or question.

Introduction

This *Upanishad* is an integral part of *Pippaladashakiya Brahmana* of the *Atharva Veda*. In this *Upanishad*, Pippalada Rishi has answered 6 questions of 6 sages one after another. That is why this *Upanishad* is referred to as *Prashnopanishada*.

Peace Invocation

Aum Bhadram Karnebhihi Shrunuyam Deva Bhadram
Pashyeaksha Jatraha |
Sthirairangaistushtuvansansta
Nubhihi Vyashem Devhitam Yadayuhu |
Swasti Na Indro Vriddhashravaaha
Swasti Na Pushaa Vishwa Vedaaha |
Swasti Nastarkshyo Arishtanemihi
Swasti No Brihaspatirda Dhaatui |

Aum Shanti ! Shanti ! Shanti !

O Gods! May we worship the Lord and listen to auspicious words, see all that is only auspicious, praise the Lord with a strong body and utilize this life to perform all deeds which are good and sublime and which are bestowed upon us by God.

May Indra, whose glory and greatness is known by all and everywhere, nurture and nourish us. May Pusha, who knows everything about the world, do good to us and nourish us. May Garuda, who is equal in strength to the wheel and is the destroyer of all enemies, nourish us. May the Lord of intellect Brihaspati do good to us and pave the way towards welfare. May all our *Adhibhautik, Adhidaivik* and *Adhyatamik* worries cease to exist.

Background

In the beginning of the *Upanishad*, Bharadwaj's son Sukesha, Shivkumar, Satyakam and Suryayani, of Garga *gotra*, Aashwalayan of Kosal *desha*, Bhargav of Vidharbha and Katya's grandson Kabandhi, all six were conversant with the *Vedas* and were realized souls. Once all these six sages went out with a desire to realize the divine cosmic soul. They had heard that maharshi Pippalada knew about the supreme soul and truth. So, out of curiosity these six sages approached Maharshi Pippalada.

Seeing these six sages and realizing the intention behind their arrival, Maharshi Pippalada said, "You all are sages. You have all practised celibacy and have understood the *Vedas* in depth. That is why, you all once again practice celibacy with total devotion and start practising penance again. After this, if I know the answer to your questions, I shall definitely give it to you." Listening to this, all the six sages decided to practise penance, staying in the ashram. After the period of their celibacy and penance was over, they approached Maharshi Pippalada and expressed their curiosity.

Katya's grandson Kabandhi asked the first question with devotion: "Where do all the creatures take birth from?" O Lord! Who is he, from whom all these inanimate things and creatures have taken birth and who is the ultimate and eternal reason behind their existence.

Solution

Maharshi Pippalada said, "O Katyayana, the Lord is the master of all the creatures. He is the one who created all subjects at the time of creating universe and nature. With a firm resolution of doing this, he practised penance. As a result of the penance, *rayi* and *prana* came into existence. The main objective behind creating these two elements was to cause their fusion and create nature and pave the way for all creations."

The *rayi* and the *prana* united to create this universe. This Sun is actually *prana* which possesses the energy that can infuse life into one and all. Similarly, the Moon is *rayi* because it contains such atoms and molecules that nourish all the material and concrete things.

When the Sun rises in the east after a dark night, it beholds in itself the life of all lives on earth. The Sun bestows life and energy to everything, wherever its light reaches. So, the Sun is the *prana* or life of all the lives on earth. The fire that is inside the human body and which facilitates digestion of food, is a fraction of that energy. Hence, this radiant Sun is at the centre of all forms. All creatures evolve from the Sun and the Sun helps us to accomplish all our activities as we desire. The Sun accomplishes all the duties such as giving light, giving life to one and all, change in seasons, etc.

Penance by the Aid of *Raye*

Throwing light on the worship of God and its benefits, Maharshi Pippalada said: " O Katyayana! The twelve months of a year itself are like God, the Lord of the universe. There are two dimensions–north and south. The north dimension is the *prana* which is omniscient form of God and the south dimension *rayi* is the external material form.

In this world, those people who desire children, desire heaven and are involved in sensual pleasures, perform religious sacrifices and worship God. With the intention of enjoying worldly and transcendental happiness, they perform all their duties according to the scriptures. This is the veneration of the south dimension of God who is the embodiment of all the twelve months together. By doing this, one attains bliss and those worshippers who are desirous come back to earth. This path is known as *Pitra yaana*.

Worship of *Prana*

Unlike the desirous worshippers, the worshippers who yearn for the welfare of one and all, detach themselves from the allurements of worldly and celestial pleasures and devotedly practise celibacy and lead a life of renunciation. They practise spirituality and worship the omniscient Lord selflessly.

This is the worship of the north dimension of the Lord who is the embodiment of the twelve months together. In this way, the worshippers attain *Surya loka*. They are liberated from this world and never return to earth again.

The Spiritual Form of the Sun

The visible embodiment of the supreme lord is Lord Surya Narayan. Many philosophers say about Lord Surya Narayan that He has five legs, that is, by fusing Shishir and Hemant there are five seasons. There are five feet (*Panch charan*) of this and scholars also say that the twelve months also represent twelve figures. Even the heaven is illuminated by the light of the Sun. The water or rain that showers on earth is created from here itself. As the Sun gives water, i.e. life to all, is like a father to one and all. Other scholars have said that in this Milky Way, which is illuminated by the Sun, which comprises seven colours and six seasons, the only thing worth veneration is the omniscient Lord. The solar system which is visible to the naked eye is in fact, the body of that supreme truth.

The Worship of God with *Karma* or Actions

Every month is the embodiment of God. In them, the fifteen days of the *Krishna Paksha* (waning moon) is God's right side, which should be understood as *Rayi* (cause of all material things). This is the form of the almighty god. The fifteen days of the *Shukla Paksha* (waxing moon) is the north dimension of the Lord. This is the *prana* which infuses life into one and all and is the omniscient form of the Lord. Those who desire welfare of all and detach themselves from all the worldly things and perform all the auspicious deeds in the *Shukla Paksha* (waxing moon) and surrender all their deeds performed at the feet of the Lord *prana swarupa*. They do not desire anything out of it unlike the people who indulge in sensual pleasures and perform all their deeds during the *Krishna Paksha* to beget worldly gains. The entire day including night and day together is the complete form of the supreme god. The day is the *prana rupa* (giver of life to all), radiant, pure in form and the night is the desirous *rayi* form.

Hence, those people who indulge in sensual pleasures during the day and simultaneously tread on the path of realization, never reach their goal and their entire life is a wasteful expenditure. On the contrary, those who desire worldly pleasures, indulge in sensual pleasures at night according to the seasons as written in the scriptures. Such people who strictly observe all the rules are like *Brahmacharis* (celibates).

Food can be considered a form of *prajapati* because it is the nourisher of all and gives life. All creatures take birth from it and sustain their lives by it.

The Benefits from Both the *Sadhanas*

Those people who, to beget progeny, adhere and follow the *Prajapati Vrata*, that is, indulge in sensual pleasures, follow all the rules and regulations while performing *karma* to attain a state of bliss or heaven, help in perpetuation. Unlike these people those who lead austere and pious lives and practise penance, speak the truth, can attain *Brahma loka* and dwell in bliss eternally.

Those who are not at all wicked and those who don't even lie in their dreams, stay away from all kinds of misconduct and only those who are devoid of all demerits and flaws attain *Brahma loka* (bliss).

The Second Set of Questions

Bhargava Rishi asked Maharshi Pippalada three questions.

1. In all how many gods reside in the human body?

2. How many of them are the embodiments or epitomes of that divine soul?
3. Who is the noblest amongst all of them?

Solution

Maharshi Pippalada answered, "The only support of all the gods is the 'God' who is as infinite as the length of the sky. But Vayu, Agni, Jala and Prithvi, (*Mahabhutas*) which have taken birth from Him also support the earth. This body comprises these four elements, that is why it is supported by all the gods. The fourteen gods that reside in the body mainly are speech, the five senses, five *Jnana Indriyas* and the four levels of the mind."

These gods reside in the body and hence they represent the divinity of the supreme soul. If all these gods start fighting with each other and say with pride it is they that have supported the body, they would be no more than the 'queen bee'. Whenever the queen bee flies, all the other bees also fly and whenever she sits, all the other bees sit. This was the same state with gods such as *Vaga* (speech), etc. Seeing this, the gods which rule eyes, ears and all the senses, the four levels of the mind and the various impulses of the mind believed that amongst them, *Prana* was the noblest.

Maharshi Pippalada said that other than the bodies of all the creatures, the element that is all-pervasive, inside out is space. The four elements—air, fire, water and earth—are supplementary to the body and the various organs.

The ten senses and the mind illuminate the body and make it active. The thing that is greater to all is *prana*. It is *prana* that is the foundation of the body. There is no energy that can support the body.

The Third Set of Questions

Aswalayan Muni asked Maharshi Pippalada the third set of questions:

1. Where does the *prana* take birth of whose greatness you sing so vociferously?
2. How does this *prana* enter the human body?
3. How does it separate and divide itself and reside in the body?
4. When transcending from one body to another, how does it come out of the first body?
5. How does the *prana* support the five elements of the body?
6. How does the *prana* support the mind, the senses and spiritual plane?

Solution

Maharshi Pippalada "The noblest *prana* has emerged and taken birth from the divine cosmic soul. He is the creator and preserver of the *prana*. The *prana* and its condition depends on the supreme god's wishes. The answer to the second question is that the *prana* enters the body by the resolution taken by the mind. Thus, according to the resolution taken which accrues from the deeds performed, the soul assumes the desired body or form."

Answering the third question, Maharshi Pippalada said: that "Like an emperor who appoints different officers in charge and authorities in villages and different parts so that they can do their work independently and delegates duty to them differently, the *prana* also, along with its different organs *apaana, vyaana,* etc. resides at different places in the body to perform different duties assigned to them."

The Presence and Work of *Prana-Vyana* and *Samana* in the Body

The *prana* itself moves about the mouth, the nose and finally resides in the eyes and ears. The *apaana* resides in the rectum. The work of *apaana* is excretion of urine, faeces and other undigested matter. The other functions include removal of semen, fluids (menstrual) and the foetus. The *samana* resides near the navel. The *samana vayu* sends all the energy created out of food in the stomach to each and every organ. Nourished by this energy, the eyes, ears, nose and tongue become strong and energetic to work properly.

The *Vyana*

Basically in the heart of a human body, there are a hundred nerve. Each and every branch of the nerves has two crore sub *nadis* (sub nerves) each. Cumulatively in the body, there are two crore nerves. The *vyana vayu* passes through all the nerves throughout the body.

The *Udaana* and its Functions

Other than these two crore nerves, there is another nerve known as *sushumna* which begins from the heart and goes right up to the head. It is through this that the *udaana vayu* circulates in the upper part of the body. In the person, who is virtuous and enjoys all the good fruits accrued from good deeds, *udaana vayu* along with the *prana* and the senses, takes the soul to the state of bliss or heaven. A person who engages in bad deeds takes birth in inferior *yonis* like dogs, pigs, etc. Those people whose deeds are mixed are liable to assume the human body which can bear mixed results.

The *Prana* and the Senses

The Sun external *prana*. This *prana* takes birth or rises and nourishes the external body. It illuminates the spiritual plane of the body by strengthening the eyes and the senses. The energy of *apaana vayu* takes care of the human body and nourishes it.

The *Apaana Vayu* helps in the excretory functions and helps in supporting the external form. The space that is interspersed between the *swarga* (heaven) and the earth itself is the external form of the *samana vayu*. It gives relaxation to the external organs and protects the body. It also facilitates the circulation of the *samana vayu* throughout the body. It is because of this that the ears can hear sounds and the senses can perceive.

The *vayu* that roams freely in space is the external form of *vyana*. It is this that makes the body active internally and externally and bestows upon it peace and calmness. It also helps in circulation of *vyan* in the *vyana* nerves which in turn facilitate the functions of the skin.

The heat of the Sun and fire is the external form of *Udaana*. It saves the body from becoming cold and it also maintains the heat within the body. A body from which the *udaana vayu* dissipates can no longer remain warm. As a result, the heat within the body also dissipates. All the senses of such a body fuse into the mind along with *Udaana Vayu* and enter into another body.

The Material and Spiritual Benefits of *Prana*

The scholars who understand in totality the concept of the *prana*, take care of their *prana* at all costs. They do not neglect it and as a result are never devoid of progeny. If the person understands the spiritual truth behind the science of *prana* and makes his life successful on the basis of it, he instantly enjoys the beauty of God and is liberated from the vicious cycle of life and death. He attains the supreme cosmic divine soul.

The Fourth Set of Questions

Gargya Muni asked Maharshi Pippalada the fourth set of questions:

1. Which of the gods in the body go to sleep or are inactive while sleeping?
2. Which of them are active during sleep?
3. Which of these gods see and witness the dream in the dream state ?
4. Who, in the real sense, experiences happiness in the state of sleep?
5. Whom do all these gods depend upon?

Solution

Maharshi Pippalada replied "While sleeping, all the gods (all the senses) fuse and are absorbed by the mind which is the noblest god. All the ten senses remain dormant while sleeping."

"When a person is sleeping, all the five *pranas* are awake and are active. In the dream state, a human being experiences divinity through his mind and senses. In his dreams, he sees all that he had heard and seen in the past. He experiences all that he has undergone in the past by being a part of it as an onlooker. He also sees that which is false and not in existence at all. At that time, there is nothing other than the living being."

Maharshi further said, "In the state of sleep, the mind comes in control of the *udaana vayu*. The *udaana vayu* reaches the heart and entices it. At that time, the living being ceases to see anything in the dream state and experiences the happiness of sleep."

"All the elements from earth to the *prana* take refuge in the divine supreme soul which is itself the soul. The living being, who enjoys sensual pleasures finally comes in the refuge of the divine cosmic soul. By attaining this, the person experiences real happiness."

The Fifth Question

Satyakama asked the fifth question related to the worship of *omkar*. He asked, " What does one attain by worshipping and propitiating the *omkar*?"

Maharshi Pippalada replied, "Satyakama! This *Aum* is not separate from the divine cosmic soul."

"Those who are attached to heaven and related pleasures and propitiate the *omkar* to accomplish and enjoy all the pleasures takes birth on earth."

"Those who are not attached to worldly objects and on the contrary strive selflessly to attain the divine Cosmic soul attain the *omkar*. This *omkar* or cosmic soul is free from flaws, is fearless and noble."

Sixth Question

Sukesha Rishi asked Maharshi Pippalada the 6th question, "O Revered One! Tell me, what are the elements of a person who is omnipresent and omniscient? Where is he and what is his form?"

Solution

Maharshi Pippalada replied: "God's divine form is itself the omnipresent and omniscient form of God.

When a human desires to attain God in his heart, he attains Him in his heart itself. The divine cosmic soul embellished this universe with all sixteen qualities and he pervaded this universe along with the living being. That is why he is known as the one embellished with six qualities.

Similar to the concept that God resides in this universe, God also resides in the body and there are six qualities in the body. We have to realize this cosmic soul with six qualities in the heart.

During the time of final annihilation, the sixteen qualities finally merge into the divine cosmic soul. *Prana* is dependent on God or the cosmic soul embellished by sixteen qualities. By realizing this, one does not even fear death."

Thus answering the six set of questions, Maharshi Pippalada emphasized on that there is nothing greater than God.

Attaining the knowledge of the fact the divine cosmic soul from Maharshi, the six sages worshipped him and said, "You are our father. There is no one greater than a Guru who will help one to cross the ocean of material life. We thus bow to you with respect and honour."

Svetasvataropanishad

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* belongs to the Taittiriya school of the *Yajur Veda.* Its name is derived from the sage who taught it. It is theistic in character and identifies the Supreme Brahman with Rudra who is conceived as the material and the efficient cause of the world, and not only as the author of the world but also its protector and guide. The elements associated with theism, personal God and devotion to Him, which are to be met with undoubtedly in the other *Upanishads,* become prominent in the *Svetasvataraopanishad.*

The emphasis is not on Brahman the Absolute, whose complete perfection does not admit of any change or evolution but on the personal *Iswara,* omniscient and omnipotent who is the manifested Brahma.

Terms which were used by the later Samkhya philosophy occur in the *Upanishad,* but the dualism of the *Samkhya, purusa* and *prakrti,* is overcome. Nature or *pradhana,* is not an independent entity but belongs to the self of the divine, *devatma-sakti* God is the *mayin,* the maker of the world which is *maya* or made by him.

The *Upanishad* teaches the unity of the souls and world in one supreme reality. The *Upanishad* is an attempt to reconcile the different philosophical and religious views, which prevailed at the time of its composition.

Peace Invocation

Aum Sahanavavatu Sahanao Bhunaktu |
Shhaviryam Karvaavahai |
Tejasvinavadhita Mastu |
Ma Vidvisha Vahai |

Aum Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

First Chapter

Brahma's Curiosity

Curious people started discussing amongst themselves, "O sages! We have read in the *Vedas* that Brahma is the cause of this universe. So, who is Brahma? What are we born from and what is the essence of life? Who is the protector and convenor of this universe?"

The *Vedas* speak about many a reason which is responsible for the evolution of this universe. At some place, it is either time, nature, action or a sudden incident and at some places, the cause mentioned is either the five elements or the living being.

A consensus has to be reached as to what is the cause. On contemplation, we realize that neither time nor the five elements are the things that led to the creation of this universe. Neither independently nor unitedly can they be accrued as the cause of this universe. All these aforesaid elements cannot work voluntarily. Although the living being is conscious, he cannot be the reason thereof because he is also subjected to time and fate. Hence, the reason is something other than all this.

Realization of the Cosmic Element by Meditation

When all these scholars and sages could not come to a consensus on the reason behind the universe, they realized the cosmic element by meditation and penance—which seems to be embellished by merits but in reality is beyond merits. They opined that all the reasons mentioned are protected by the divine cosmic soul who is all mighty and all pervasive.

The World as an Endless Cycle

These sages saw that formless nature was the wheel of this universe. The three qualities are the three forces of this cycle of nature. In this wheel, the mind, intellect, ego, space, air, earth, radiance, water (these small elements) and the eight concrete forms of this are the sixteen ends. This wheel has fifty dimensions which are the fifty types of impulses of the inner mind. The ten senses, the five objects and five *pranas* are the assisting *aras* (dimensions). In this wheel, six articles are divided into eight chunks respectively. There is one noose which ties down all the living beings to this world. There are three paths—*Devayana, Pitruyana* and the path that leads from one birth to another birth. Goodness and sin are two factors responsible to turn this wheel. The navel is the hub of the wheel and similarly, ignorance is the centre of this world.

The World in the Form of a River

The scholars realized in meditation that this universe is in the form of a huge river, the flow of which is tremendous. Those who fall into it have to bear the pain of death. It is difficult to transcend this river.

Freedom by Availing to the Help of the Supreme God

To maintain all the creatures and their life, the supreme god in his gigantic form transmigrate individual beings from one birth to another according to one's actions. Unless the individual soul does not realize the convenor and does not liberate himself from this world he cannot be emancipated. He becomes the loved one of God and attains immortality.

The Form of the Supreme God and the Benefits of Knowing Him

By the union of the ephemeral world and the indestructible soul, the supreme god nurtures and nourishes the universe. The supreme god is all pervasive; He is the creator, protector and preserver of this universe. The unredeemed being gets entangled in the web of nature and eventually cannot free himself. When he attempts to realize God and goes towards Him, he gets liberated from the shackles of materialism. After the body ceases, the soul attains bliss and an exalted position. He becomes *purna karma* by exhausting and then transcending all his desires.

The Intelligible Element—The Supreme God

The supreme god dwells within us. We do not need to go anywhere to realize Him. There is nothing greater worth than realizing Him. Just as one cannot see the form of fire hidden in wood (*kashta*) but the presence of it is considered inevitable, similarly the supreme god is not conspicuous or palpable but is a factor or element worth realizing. By reciting the *Aum* mantra, one can realize this cosmic spirit in the body itself. The supreme god resides in the body just as the oil of *til* (sesame) is within the sesame seeds or purified butter is in milk.

Second Chapter

The Prayer to the Supreme God

The prayers offered to God with the aid of the first five mantras of the second chapter are, "O creator of All! Instill the sense of self-realization by initiating the mind and the intellect and by encouraging us towards you and by seeing the brilliance of the gods seated in various senses, help us to transcend all the worldly things and orient our senses towards higher goals.

May our mind be totally devoted in the propitiation of the supreme god. May we tirelessly work towards the realization and experience of God.

May we meditate upon God so that we realize him. Enlighten our mind, intellect and the senses in the right direction. May we always sing the glory of the all-pervasive supreme god.

O mind and intellect! May the greatness described by me spread in the world and may all those divine sons of god residing in the divine world listen to this.

The Meditative State towards Godhood

By concentrating upon the cosmic spirit and by reciting and contemplating on the names and by controlling the *prana vayu* (breath) one can experience the beauty of divinity. In this state, the mind becomes pure and chaste and all the accumulated action (past *karma*) do not become obstacles. In this way, we should meditate upon God by making the body, the breath, the mind and the *aasan* (seat) pure.

The Indication of Successful Spiritual Practice

While practising spiritual penance, sages often get to initially see objects like mist, smoke, sun, air and *agni* and objects like fireflies, lightning, crystals, gems and the Moon afterwards. In *dhyan yoga* or meditation, all the five elements are sublimated. One attains five forces or energies because of this and such a *yogi* (sage) does not need to fear ailments, old age and death.

By gaining control over the senses, the *yogi* acquires novel powers other than the present energies, remains healthy, light and free from all ailments. He becomes detached from worldly attachments. He becomes radiant and his speech becomes soft. Thus, by meditation a *yogi* attains a state of *Kaivalya bhava*, by which all his miseries are eliminated forever and he becomes immortal.

Third Chapter

The Different Descriptions of God

The all mighty, all-pervasive divine cosmic soul has created this universe and is reigning over it. He is capable of creating and expanding the universe as he wishes. His devotee, who realizes Him, also becomes immortal. The supreme god is also Rudra, the Sun. At the time of final dissolution, the supreme god can merge into the entire universe and become one. He is the one who witnesses every action and thought of this universe. He embellishes every position and creatures with some special and peculiar characteristics.

The supreme God Rudra created all gods alike Indra and expanded them. He is the one who shall do good to one and all.

The Experiences of the Scholars

The scholars say: "We know He who is the greatest divine cosmic soul is beyond ignorance and is as brilliant as the Sun. By realizing Him, one can break away from the shackles of birth and death. There is no other way than this which can lead to realization.

The supreme god is as small as a finger and is seated in the heart of all. He is the master of the mind and can be realized by having a pure mind.

The divine cosmic spirit is engaged in the divine play which is performed in the outside world and the human body which has nine doors or openings.

Despite having no senses or organs, He can see and listen to everything. He knows all of us but we do not know him. Scholars refer to Him as the noble soul or *mahapurush*.

He is the infinitesimal and infinite simultaneously. By the divine blessings, man can realize the greatness of the supreme god. He is devoid of decay and mortality. He is the beginning of everything and is the soul of all.

Fourth Chapter

The Prayer Towards God

The formless god who is devoid of colour and form and who has assumed many forms at the beginning of the universe for a specific purpose and in whom the entire world fuses at the time of final dissolution, is second to none and may He bless me with good intellect.

He is the embodiment of all elements gods present. His forms are endless and at times intangible. "You face all the directions simultaneously. The animate and inanimate world around is your expression."

The Form of Nature

Nature in the presidentship of her creator; the supreme god like herself creates innumerable creatures embellished with three qualities that is *Satva*, *Raja*, and

Tama. *Satva's* the colour is white, colour of *Raja* is red and the colour of *Tama* is black.

The unredeemed body becomes attached to nature and falls in the trap. The scholars realize the dangers and detach themselves from these worldly attachments.

The Form of the Unredeemed Body

The human body is like a 'pipal' tree. God and the unredeemed body both sit on this tree. Both are like friendly birds. The unredeemed body in the form of a bird eats the fruits on the tree and as a result undergoes a vale of sufferings. On the contrary, the divine spirit does not attach itself to anything. It merely becomes an onlooker and remains so eternally.

When the supreme god takes pity on the unredeemed body and as a result the *jiva* realizes the essence of divinity, it becomes liberated from suffering and grief.

The State of the Supreme God

A person who does not know the cosmic spirit but understands the concept behind Him assumes an exalted position. All the *Vedas*, prosodys and *yagyas* speak of the glory of the supreme god. No human being can liberate himself unless he realizes the supreme truth.

Nature is the Delusion Created by the Supreme God

The power protected by the supreme god in the universe is referred to as *maya* or delusion and the supreme god is the *mayapati* or the one who reigns over this delusion. It is the nature of the supreme god to engage in the divine play. "O Rudra! We experience your beauty and sing your glory. You are capable of protecting us from delusion, please do not become angry on your devotees. Always protect our children and our wealth."

Fifth Chapter

The Supreme God Rules over Knowledge and Ignorance

The supreme god is even greater than Brahma. Both knowledge and ignorance reside in Him, which means that both are dependent on the supreme god.

Initially it was this supreme god who had given the first sermon of knowledge to Brahma. He created different forms and elements such as intellect, space and at the time of final dissolution, all these elements merged into Him. Just as the Sun gives light to the entire cosmos, the supreme god reigns on all the creatures in the universe.

Even the *Vedas* speak about the supreme god. First Brahma realized Him and subsequently many gods and sages have realized Him. They all were absorbed into that embodiment of divine happiness.

The Form of the Individual Soul (*Jeeva*)

The individual soul dwells in the heart of a human being. The factual characteristic of the soul is that it is as brilliant as the Sun. The soul is devoid of the darkness of ignorance. As this *jeeva* attaches itself to ephemeral worldly objects, it has to undergo transmigration. The *jeeva* is very minute but it is equally infinite. It is confined to one state because of the merits of intellect that is the resolution and the ego.

The *jeeva* is neither male nor female and or a neuter gender. It assumes form according to the body it merges or impregnates into. It is devoid of titles but has to bear the fruits of its actions by taking birth in different *yonis* (forms).

The Method to Liberate Oneself From Life and Death

Due to the actions performed, the body has to undergo transmigration and a vale of sufferings. Humans can liberate themselves only when they realize the eternal truth and the supreme god in their heart. The supreme god is formless but He can be attained by devotion, faith and pure love. A person who realizes him becomes immortal and is freed from the vicious cycle of life and death.

Sixth Chapter

Supreme God is the Cause of the Universe

Some scholars refer to time and some scholars refer to nature as the reason behind the genesis of the universe. In reality, these people are hypnotized by the glory of the God and are not able to perceive the evident reason behind the universe. The supreme god is the one that initiates this process of the universe. He is omniscient and has created this universe made up of five elements.

The supreme god first created the five elements of nature and by uniting the animate with the inanimate, He created this strange world which can be experienced in different forms.

Liberation by *Karmayoga* (Selfless Actions)

Those *karma yogis* who perform all their duties connected to the *Varnashram* and according to the situations, who renounce their desires and attachments, destroy all their accumulated actions by surrendering them to the supreme god, they are no longer associated with the *karmas*.

Such people attain divinity and transcend all the worldly ephemeral and material attachments which are merely a delusion.

Liberation Through Worship/Propitiation

Only the supreme god is worth praising. The supreme cosmic soul is beyond time. He is the reason behind the union of nature and the *jeeva*. The person who has indomitable faith in the supreme god and propitiates Him out of devotion and respect undoubtedly is freed from the shackles of misery and heads towards godhood.

Liberation Through Knowledge

It is the supreme god who regulates the universe. He is the one who destroys evil and propagates peace, *dharma* and happiness. He is the protector of all comforts and is the base of this entire universe. He is present within us, in our heart. By realizing all these things, the scholars attain godhood.

The supreme god or the cosmic spirit is the God of all gods and is venerable for all the gods. He is the embodiment of divine knowledge, light and is the master of all protectors.

The Praises of the Supreme God in Different Ways

The supreme god is omnipresent and omniscient. He is all-pervasive and all mighty. He is the embodiment of divine knowledge and love. He is attainable by knowledge, actions and devotion. Even the Sun loses his brilliance before the supreme god.

By realizing Him the unredeemed soul is liberated for eternity. There is no other way one can realize divinity.

The Form of God

The supreme god is beyond time and is the embodiment of divine knowledge.

He who seeks the refuge of the supreme god, attains salvation.

Conclusion

A sage named Svetasvatara renounced all worldly happiness as a result of penance. He practised restraint and meditated on the divine cosmic spirit. On realization, he gave sermons to the people who are devoted and are devoid of ego. This knowledge is narrated in the *Upanishad*.

This knowledge should be given to only a disciple who has patience and is calm. According to the faith in the supreme god and faith towards the Guru, the curious disciple realizes many truths. Hence, devotion and faith are the things that are imperative for realization of the divine cosmic spirit.

Chapter Fourteen

Brahman

Brahman, the Absolute God of *Vedanta,* is a very mysterious being. In Hinduism, He occupies the highest place, as the creator and enjoyer of all creation.

Brahman

Brahman is the very space and the entire universe, with billions of galaxies and interstellar spaces and much more than that. The idea of Brahman probably entered the consciousness of ancient Hindu seers as they contemplated upon the vast expansive sky and the star-studded mysterious night skies. The *Upanishads* present a grand view of this Absolute and highest God of Hinduism.

Belief in One God

There is a misconception among many that the Hindus worship many gods. To those not familiar with Hinduism, this practice of Hindus appear absurd and primitive. The way Hindus worship gods is different from the way the ancient Hittites or the Mediterranean people worshipped their gods. Hindus worship many gods and goddesses, but at the same time, they firmly believe in the unquestionable fact that God is but one indivisible Supreme Truth.

Difficulties in Understanding Brahman

Any attempt to explain Brahman to the satisfaction of a mind that is driven by reason and familiar with the concretization of thought is fraught with enormous difficulties, because that which is inexplicable cannot be explained by any amount of reasoning and logic. Brahman is beyond the senses, beyond the mind, beyond our intelligence and dreams.

Aspects of Brahman

Brahman is both the unmanifest and the manifest, the formless and the one with form. He is here and beyond. There are four grand aspects of Brahman, which are not known even to many Hindus.

The Brahma Wheel

The *Svetavastara Upanishad* describes the qualities of the manifest creation inhabited by the divine power of God (*devatma-shakti*). Unlike the *Prakriti* of the Samkhya school, the *shakti* that is described here is not independent of Brahman but an aspect of Him. This article describes the qualities of the manifested creation.

Brahman and Self-Realization

Who is this mysterious Brahman? Who is this Being whom we call God, who is described so beautifully in the Upanishads, extolled for centuries by seers and sages in the sacred land of the *Vedas*?

A few minutes of prayer, a little attention to God, may be better in a way compared to no religious activity. But if any one believes that it is going to bring him or her face-to-face with God, he or she is badly mistaken.

Brahman: the Highest God

Brahman is the central theme of almost all the *Upanishads*. Brahman is the indescribable, inexhaustible, omniscient, omnipresent, original, first, eternal and absolute principle who is without a beginning, without an end, who is hidden in all and who is the cause, source, material and effect of all creation known, unknown and yet to happen in the entire universe.

He is the incomprehensible, unapproachable radiant being whom the ordinary senses and ordinary intellect cannot fathom grasp or able to describe even with partial success.

He is the mysterious being totally out of the reach of all sensory activity, rationale effort and mere intellectual, decorative and pompous endeavour.

The *Upanishads* describe Him as the indivisible, eternal universal self, who is present in all and in whom all are present.

Generally unknown and mysterious to the ordinary masses, Brahman of the *Upanishads* remained mostly confined to the meditative minds of the ancient seers who considered Him to be too sacred and esoteric to be brought out and dissected amidst public glare.

Though impassioned and above the ordinary feelings of the mind, the masters of the *Upanishads* sometimes could not suppress the glory, the emotion, the passion and the poetry that accompanied the vast and utterly delightful, inner experience of His vast vision.

In the *Mundaka Upanishad*, the mind explodes to reverberate with this verse, "Imperishable is the Lord of love, as from a blazing fire thousands of sparks leap forth, so millions of beings arise from Him and return to Him."

Again in the *Katha Upanishad* we come across a very poetic and emphatic expression, "In His robe are woven heaven and earth, mind and body... He is the bridge from death to deathless life."

The Brahman of the *Upanishads*, is not meant for the ordinary or the ignorant souls, who are accustomed to seek spiritual solace through ritualistic practices and rationalization of knowledge.

Discipline, determination, guidance from a self-realized soul, purity of mind, mastery of the senses, self-control and desireless actions are some of the pre-requisites needed to achieve even a semblance of success on this path.

Only the strong of heart and pure of mind can think of dislodging layer after layer of illusion and ignorance that surrounds him and see the golden light of Truth beckoning from beyond.

He is not like the other gods either. He is incomprehensible even to almost all the gods. And He chooses not to be worshipped in the temples and other places of worship but in one's heart and mind as the dweller in the material body and master of the senses, the charioteer.

He is too remote and incomprehensible to be revered and approached with personal supplications although He is the deepest and the highest vision mankind could ever conceive of or attain.

The weak and the timid stand no chance to approach Him even remotely, except through some circuitous route. For the materialistic and the otherworldly who excel in the art of converting everything and anything into a source of personal gain, He does not offer any attraction, solace or security as a personal god.

That is why we do not see any temples or forms of ritualistic worship existing for Brahman either at present or in the past. We only hear of fire sacrifice, later to be called Nachiketa fire, to attain Him, which was taught to the young Nachiketa by the god of death, but lost to us in the course of time. Perhaps the sacrifice was more a meditative or spiritual practice involving the sacrifice of soul consciousness than a ritual worship.

Whatever it is, the fact is that Brahman of the *Upanishads* is more appealing to the seekers of Truth and Knowledge than seekers of material gains.

Even during the Islamic rule, when the principles of monotheism challenged the very foundations of Hinduism, Brahman was never brought into the glare of public debate to challenge the invading and overwhelming ideas of the monotheistic foreign theology.

And even during the period of the Bhakti movement, when the path of devotion assumed unparalleled importance in the medieval Hindu society, Brahman was somehow not made the centre of direct worship in the form of Brahman as such. He became the personal God with a name and form, but remained outside the preview of the Bhakti movement.

Perhaps the exclusion was so evident and seemingly so intentional that even Lord Brahma, the first among the Trinity and the first among the created, was also simultaneously excluded from the ritualistic worship, probably for the similarity in names. Very few temples exist for this god even today in India, probably as He is seen more as a source of intelligence and creativity than of material wealth.

Some *Upanishads* do describe Brahman as the Lord of Love. It is a description born out of pure personal experience of a seeker of truth, not from a devotee's imaginative and self-induced emotional energy.

The description and approach, therefore, is more philosophical and impressionably revelatory in its approach than feverishly emotional or reverently devotional. The reason was not difficult to understand.

Brahman was too remote, indifferent, disinterested, too vast a principle to be reduced into meaningful and intellectually satisfying forms and shapes and worshipped as such.

Existing beyond all the surface activities of illusory life, he was like the remote star, heard but rarely seen, seen but vaguely remembered, remembered but rarely explicable, unlike the daily sun that traversed across the sky spreading its splendour in all directions and appealing to the common man with its intensity, visible luminosity and comforting him with its assuring and predictable routine.

Hidden, however, in the practice of Bhakti was the inherent and inviolable belief that the aim of all devotion was the attainment of the supreme self, though the path chosen for the purpose was circuitous and symbolic, rarely suggestive of any direct involvement of the eternal Brahman Himself in His original formless condition.

Since the mind could only comprehend and derive inspiration in a language that it can understand and interpret, the Saguna Brahman, *Iswara* in the form of various manifestations became the object of devotion and personal worship.

But the same was not true of the formless Nirguna Brahman, beyond duality and activity. Ignoring the citadels of human civilization, He, the Absolute, continued to remain in the hearts of His spiritual aspirants, away from the din of materialistic life.

He remain confined even as of today, to a few illumined minds, guiding them in His mysterious and invisible ways through the minds of self-realized souls, who have been too spiritualistic and disinterested in worldly life to consider anything other than self as a matter of spiritual interest.

The ancient seers described Brahman as the eternal principle, the unity behind all, the connecting principle, the light shining through all.

But at the same time, they referred to him variously as almost everything. He was thus One and the many, the finite and the infinite, the centre as well as the circumference, the enjoyed as well the enjoyer, the hidden as well as the manifest, in a nutshell, everything and anything that we can conceive of or imagine.

Incomprehensible even to the gods, as the *Kena Upanishad* narrates, He stands above all, tall and mysterious, almost incommunicable except through personal experience and inner voyage.

As a formless being, He was the Nirguna Brahman, the unqualified principle totally beyond the reach of all levels of intelligence. Assuming myriad forms He becomes Saguna Brahman, the one with attributes and qualifications.

In this capacity as the formless and the One with form, He becomes all the multiplicity in this vast universe. He becomes everything and also nothing.

Thus, He is the day and the night, light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, the river and the ocean, the sky and the earth, the sound and the silence, the smallest as well as the biggest of all and also the abyss of the mysterious nothingness.

The attributes are many and repetitively suggestive of His universality and His unquestionable supremacy.

This existence of the duality and the myriad contradictions inherent in the creation of life are the riddles which the minds of the disciples are expected to understand and assimilate till all the confusion and contradiction becomes reduced to one harmonious and meaningful mass of Truth.

In the *Katha Upanishad,* we come across this explanation of Brahman being compared to the Aswaththa tree in reverse, whose roots are above and the branches spread down below. "Its pure root is Brahman from whom the world draws nourishment and whom none can surpass." Actually this is an analogy drawn from the Sun whose base is above and whose rays spread downwards in thousand directions.

Myriad are the ways in which Brahman is described in the *Upanishads*. The verses strenuously struggle to explain the novice students of spiritual practice the immensity of the object of their meditation.

Theirs is a feeling of respect and reverence mixed with fear and awe. Even the gods seem to be not very comfortable with this concept of an unknown, mysterious and unfathomable god.

The god of death explains to the young Nachiketa, "In fear of Him the fire burns, the sun shines, the clouds rain and the winds blow. In fear of Him death stalks about to kill."

He is the creator, the life-giver and also the reliever of the devoted and determined from bondage. The manifest universe is his creation. He created it through Self-projection, out of *ananda,* i.e. pure *delight*.

The process of creation is not very explicitly mentioned but one can draw some inferences from verses such as this, "The deathless Self meditated upon Himself and projected the universe as an evolutionary energy. From this energy developed life, the mind, the elements, and the world of *karma*."

This is not the god who can be supplicated with rituals and sacrifices. The Upanishadic seers did not show much respect to the outer aspects of religious practice. The rituals according to them constituted the lower knowledge.

"Such rituals," declares he, "are unsafe rafts for crossing the sea of worldly life, of birth and death. Doomed to shipwreck are they who try to cross the sea of worldly life on these poor rafts."

The argument does not end here. It goes on, "Ignorant of their ignorance, yet wise in their estimate, these deluded men, proud of their learning go round and round like the blind, led by the blind. Living in darkness, immature and unaware of any higher good or goal, they fall again and again into the sea."

Hinduism: Belief in One God

The Hindus believe in many gods and goddesses. At the same time, they also believe in the existence of one Supreme God, whom they call variously as *Paramatma* (Supreme Self), *Parameshwar* (Supreme Lord), *Parampita* (Supreme Father), *Iswara, Maheswara, Bhagawan, Purusha, Purushottama, Hiranyagarbha* and so on.

God is one, but also many. He manifests Himself in innumerable forms and shapes. As *Purusha* (Universal Male), He enters *Prakriti* (Nature, Matter or Divine Energy) and brings forth the numerous worlds and beings into existence. He upholds His entire creation with His unlimited powers.

He is both the Known and the Unknown, the Being as well as the Non-Being, Reality as well as Unreality. As the Unknown, He is rarely known and worshipped for the path for those who choose to worship Him as the Unmanifest difficult and painful is (The *Bhagavad-Gita* XII.6).

He exists in all and all beings exist in Him. There is nothing other than Him, and there is nothing that is outside of Him. He is imperishable, unknowable, immortal, infinite, without a beginning and without an end. All the same when worshipped with intense devotion and unshakeable faith, He responds to the calls of His devotees and comes to their aid and rescue.

All the gods and goddeses are His manifestations only. In His female aspect, He is Shakti, who as the Divine Universal Mother assists the whole creation to proceed through the process of evolution in Her own mysterious ways.

The relationship between man and God is purely personal and each can approach Him in his own way. There are no fixed rules and no central controlling authority on the subject of do's and don'ts. There are of course scriptures and Smritis but whether to follow them or not is purely an individual choice.

The concept of monotheism is not new to Hinduism. It is as old as the *Vedas*. References to One indivisible and mysterious God are found in the *Rig Veda*. The concept is the central theme of all the *Upanishads* in which He is variously referred as *Brahman, Iswara, Hiranyagarbha, Asat,* etc.

While the students of the *Upanishads* tried to understand Him through the path of knowledge and thereby made it the exclusive domain of a few enlightened persons, the *bhakti marg* or the path of devotion brought Him closer to the masses.

The One Imperishable and Ancient Being was no more a God of remote heights, but down to earth, ready to help His needy devotees and willing to perform miracles if necessary.

The rise of tantric cults added a new dimension to our understanding of Him. To the tantric worshippers, the Supreme Self is the Universal Mother. *Purusha* is subordinate to Her and willing to play a secondary role in Her creation. By Himself He cannot initiate creation unless He joins with His Shakti.

On the abstract level, He is *Satchitananda*—Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. He is the inhabitant of the whole world. There is nothing that is outside of Him or without Him. He exists in the individual being as *atman*, the enjoyer who delights in Himself, without undergoing any change, but willing to participate in the cycle of births and deaths and bear witness to all the illusions of life.

He can be realized in many ways, which broadly fall into three main categories:

1. the path of knowledge,
2. the path of devotion, and
3. the path of renunciation.

Of this the middle one is the best, the first one is very difficult and the third one requires immense sacrifice and inner purification.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, we come across the path of action which combines the rest of the three into one integrated whole in which a devotee has to live his life with a sense of supreme sacrifice, performing his actions with detachment, without any desire for the fruit of actions and offering them to God with pure devotion and total surrender.

Hindus have a very broad approach to the concept of God. The names that people give to Him are mere reference points for the sake of our understanding. How can He have names, who is actually beyond all words and thoughts?

He represents the loftiest ideal which mankind can aspire to achieve. He is the goal and reaching Him in our individual ways is the very purpose of our lives. Those who quarrel over his name are blind men who grope in the darkness and go to the world of ignorance.

Truly the Brahman of Hinduism represents the highest principle which the human mind can ever conceive of. He is not the god of just one world or a few worlds, but represents the entire known and unknown Universe as well as the past, the present and the future that is yet to come.

Difficulties in Understanding Brahman

Any attempt to explain Brahman to the satisfaction of a mind that is driven by reason and familiar with concrete thought is fraught with enormous difficulties, because that which is inexplicable cannot be explained by any amount of reasoning and logic. Brahman is beyond the senses, beyond the mind, beyond our intelligence and dreams.

Brahman is very difficult to be explained to the satisfaction of an intellectual and curious mind? The *Rig Vedic* seers themselves had this problem in their mind when they called Him vaguely as 'IT' or 'This' or 'That'.

The difficulty in understanding and knowing Brahman is well explained in the *Kena Upanishad*. Even gods are not free from their ignorance of Brahman (II.2.1). All that we can understand about Brahman is that we cannot understand Him. Even after prolonged spiritual practice and meditation, one cannot conclude whether one knows Him or not. If a person thinks that he knows Him, he does not know that he does not know. To whomsoever He is not known, He is known to him. But to whomsoever He is known, is not known to him. He is not understood by those who understand It and understood by those who do not understand Him. He can be known only when one experiences him directly at all levels of consciousness (II. 2. 2-4).

Trying to worship Brahman incorrectly and ignorantly without knowing the right approach can also result in great difficulties for a person who is on the path to salvation.

The *Isa Upanishad* warns the students of Brahman not to take sides while approaching Brahman. Those who worship the unmanifest (*asambhutim*) enter blinding darkness and those who worship the manifest only (*sambhutim*) enter into greater darkness. The right approach is to worship both and realize one through the other.

Even an enlightened seer like Yagnavalkya had difficulties in explaining the nature of Brahman and his creation. While speaking to Sakalya in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* he declares, "That Self is not this, not this. It is incomprehensible for it is not comprehended." When Gargi Vacaknavi asks him too many questions, in the same *Upanishad,* he expresses his irritation saying, "Gargi, do not question too much. Otherwise your head may fall off. You are asking so many questions about a divinity about whom we are not expected to ask many questions."

Elsewhere in the same *Upanishad* he resorts to negative terminology to explain the inexplicable using such words as *aksaram* (imperishable), *asthulam* (not gross), *ananu* (not subtle), *ahrasvam* (not short), *adirgham* (not long), *achchayam* (not shadow), *atamah* (not tamasic) and so on (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* III.8.8).

What is the original state of Brahman? Even the seers do not seem to have an answer. Uddalaka Aruni tells Svetaketu in the *Chandogya Upanishad*, that in the beginning the being was alone, one only, one without a second and in the next moment changes his statement stating that according to some in the beginning the non-being was alone, without a second and that from that non-being, being was produced. (VI.2.1)

The 24 Principles of Creation & Samkhya Yoga

Hinduism owes a great deal to the Samkhya school of philosophy, which influenced the minds of many great scholars in ancient India. Though it started with an atheistic note on the nature of creation and existence of God, its fundamental philosophy was gradually absorbed into the main stream of Hinduism with some suitable modifications.

According to the Samkhya philosophy, Prakriti is the unmanifest, primal resource, the sum total of the universal energy that manifests itself in various material forms in different planes. The creative process (*shristi*) begins, when *purusha*, the individual soul enters and becomes established in it. Out of this process evolve 24 principles, which are as follows:

Mahat: The great principle (1).

Buddhi: The discriminating, reasoning and causative intelligence (2).

Ahamkara: The ego-principle (3).

Manas: The mind or the sixth sense (4).

Panchendiryas: The five sense organs (9).

Five Karmendriyas: The five organs of action (14).

Five Tanmantras: The five subtle elements (19).

Five Mahabhutas: The five gross elements (earth, water, air, fire and ether)(24).

These are the evolutes. The *mahat* is the first to emerge in this process of evolution. The *mahat* is *prakriti* or the primordial nature in its dynamic aspect. From the *mahat* evolves buddhi and Manas. *Buddhi* is the principle of intelligence or the discriminating awareness and *manas* is the mind stuff consisting of pure consciousness. From *buddhi* evolve *ahamkara* or the feeling of individuality and separation and the five *tanmantras* of sound, touch smell, form or colour and taste.

The rest of the principles arise from *manas,* which are the five senses, the five organs of actions and the five gross elements. These are the 24 evolutes and together with the *purusha* (individual soul) who joins with *prakriti* to initiate this process, the number becomes 25.

As one European commentator pointed out, Samkhya is "the most significant system of philosophy that India has produced." Its popularity in ancient India can be gauged from the fact that the epic, the *Mahabharata, Manusmriti,* the *Puranas* and the *Bhagavad Gita* describe its main features though with some variations and sometimes without making a direct reference to this school.

The Samkhya school was founded by Kapila, who lived in the early ancient times, even before the composition of some of the principal *Upanishads* such as the *Svetasvatara, Katha, Prashna* and *Maitrayani Upanishads.* A comprehensive treatment of the subject can be found in an ancient scripture called the

Samkhyakarika, ascribed historically to Isvarakrishna, who probably lived in the third century A.D This scripture became more prominent with a commentary written on it by Gaudapada, who is probably different from the Gaudapada of *Mandukyopanishad* and who lived around the 8th century A.D.

The greatness of Samkhya lies in the fact that the evolution of life on earth is depicted not as miracle work of God, but as a creative process passing through different phases of change and transformation.

In fact, the original Samkhya did not accept the idea of an Absolute Principle or God behind creation. The individual soul or *purusha* is the eternal principle which joins with *prakriti*, another eternal principle to establish its presence in the material world. The individual soul is immortal. It exists prior to the emergence of other principles and will continue to exist even after the rest disappear.

The *Bhagavad Gita* picks up the basic aspects of Samkhya, but adds the principle of the supreme self or *universal purusha* as the cause of all creation.

According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *purusha* enters the *prakriti* and manifests the entire creation. At the human level, the *purusha* is compared symbolically with a man and the *prakriti* with a woman. At the microcosmic level, a union between the two indeed leads to the creation of a new being, which can be compared to the *Hiranyagarbha* (the golden embryo) at the microcosmic level.

The concept of *prakriti* as the source of material evolution probably led to the popularity of the worship of Mother Goddess and led subsequently to the emergence of Tantricism during the post Gupta period.

Aspects of Brahman

In the *Upanishads*, we come across the following four aspects of Brahman.

1. Non-Being

The pure non-being, or the unmanifest is the first principle. Variously described as the Ancient and the one without a beginning and without an end and the one without a second, very little indeed is known about this eternal, imperishable, and the unchangeable principle. The *Upanishads* are full of descriptions about it, but the confusion they create in our minds is much Brahman more than the clarifications they provide. The Upanishadic seers were content with such description as 'This', 'That' or 'It' when they spoke of Brahman, trying to make him comprehensible to the evolving minds of their disciples.

We are told that Brahman is beyond all. There the mind does not go, nor the senses, nor our understanding. It is always in front of the senses and intelligence. It is only through personal experience perhaps that one may grasp a little about Him.

It is doubtful whether anyone can really experience something which does not exist or which is simply non-existent or non-being and come back to us and describe it to us in the normal planes of thought. "Non-existent does one become if a person knows Brahman as non-being." (*Taittiriya Upanishad* II.6.1).

Perhaps it was the reason why the Buddha was silent about the existence of God and why many schools of philosophical thought arose in ancient India questioning the very existence of God as a central controlling universal principle.

The problem is that the human mind which is accustomed to the language of words and symbols cannot grasp the Absolute Truth that cannot really be compared to anything else. Even the *devas* and the gods of still higher planes have little understanding of Him, as is evident from the descriptive accounts of gods encounter with Him in the *Kena Upanishad*.

We do not even know why in the first place, He created all this. The explanation that He created these worlds and beings for His delight or *ananda* is too simplistic an explanation to satisfy the inquisitive curiosity of a well developed mind. If the Absolute creates something out of something else, be it a cause, a purpose or some reason, then that cause, purpose or reason, would be above Him and He cannot be called the Absolute.

If the Absolute is eternal and timeless and is not subject to any causative principle or the dimensions of time and space, how could there be any gap between Him and His creation? He and His creation must have happened simultaneously, without a second, without any distinction or differentiation.

Surely the creative process must have begun without any reason, without any motive, almost as if it were a spontaneous process, without the intervention of time and space or a process at the absolute level.

That the process of creation is spontaneous and without a cause would perhaps rattle many religious minds, but we have no better explanation to offer than this if we want to accept the first principle of the universe as the Absolute, Truth Eternal and Infinite Principle.

Perhaps there was a beginning to the process of creation but it might never come to a permanent conclusion, as the creative principle that manifested out of Him is also eternal and beyond dissolution as we understand in the subsequent paragraphs.

2. *Iswara*

When God wakes up from His sleep He becomes I*swara!* In His awakened state He exercises His creative will and sets in motion the creative process. Thus, *Iswara* is the creative Spirit, the Being, the awakened Non-Being, the Saguna Brahman, the Brahman with qualities, who exercising His will, His power and His wisdom creates the worlds and the world order (*Rita*).

He is the Truth Consciousness, the combination of knowledge and will, the directing and causative aspect of the universal self. He is the creative consciousness, who in the aspect of *purusha* (the universal male) joins with His other aspect *prakriti* (divine energy) and brings forth the worlds and the beings. The word *Brah* means 'to grow or to burst forth'. Thus, Iswara is the Brahman who bursts out of his own sleep (non-existence).

As the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the worlds, He is also the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesa. They are but one though they appear differently to the mortal world. They are the three qualities of His primal nature (*prakriti*), and the three aspects of his Will and consciousness, in their pure and primordial states, which wake up as He wakes up and regulate the creation.

In the *Maitri Upanishad,* we are given an account of the conception of the Trinity, how darkness (*tamas*) represented by Siva, passion (*rajas*) represented by Brahma and goodness (*sattva*) represented by Vishnu got differentiated from the Highest. (*Maitri Upanishad* V.2)

While we have no idea of what the Non-Being or the Nirakar Brahman truly is, we have the accounts of the Upanishadic seers who through self-contemplation realized *Iswara* and described Him as *Sat chit Ananda*, Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. This experience becomes possible in human beings because in the individual being, *Iswara* is verily *atman*.

In the *Katha Upanishad* Yamaraja to the young Nachiketa, "By knowing through self-contemplation (*adhyatma yoga*), that Primal Being who is difficult to be seen, who is very mysterious, who is hidden in the cave (of ones heart) and who is situated deep (within oneself), the wise men (*dhira*) leave behind both joy and sorrow."

It must be noted that there is no real distinction between Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman. They are the different states of the *Parameswara*. When the Non-Being awakens, He becomes *Iswara* and when *Iswara* takes rest at the end of creation, He becomes Non-Being.

3. Hiranyagarbha

He is the world soul (*mahan atma*), the cosmic egg, that arises out of cosmic waters and engages Himself in the creation of forms and beings. He is the first born (*prathamaja*), who manifests forms that are already contained in Him.

He is the *Sutratman* (the soul of a necklace), the thread on which all beings and all the worlds (the world of the *devas*, of the ancestors, of humans, of demons, etc.) are strung like beads in a necklace.

While *Iswara* is the causative principle (*karanabhutam*), *Hiranyagarbha* is the dynamic or the active principle (*kriyabhutam* or *karyabhutam*). He is also called Brahma who as the creative and dynamic principle uses the forms existing in Him and brings forth the beings.

The word *brah* means "bursting out or bringing forth" and *aham* means 'ego'. Brahma is therefore He who brings forth many *ahms* or egos or beings into this world, using his divine power and matter and pouring life (breath) into them. *Hiranyagarbha* is not an eternal being, but comes into existence at the beginning of creation and becomes dissolved in *Iswara* at the end of creation.

4. *Viraj*

Viraj is the manifest world, that which is created, or which is brought forth. He is the result of the creative process set in motion by *Iswara* and accomplished by *Hiranyagarbha*. He is the manifested aspect of *Iswara* through the hands of the latter.

Viraj is a world that is in perpetual motion and subject to illusion. It is a reality that is different and distinct in nature from that of *Iswara* or *Hiranyagarbha* since the interplay of the *gunas*, the elements and the senses result in the formation of numerous individual beings and ego forms (*ahamkaras*) who suffer from the illusion of individuality and feelings of separateness. *Viraj* like *Hiranyagarbha* is also subject to dissolution at the end of creation.

The Qualities of Shakti (Divine Power)

The *Svetavatara Upanishad* describes the qualities of the manifest creation inhabited by the divine power of God (*devatma-shakti*). Unlike the *prakriti* of the Samkhya school, the Shakti that is described here is not independent of Brahman but an aspect of Him. The

Upanishad describes the qualities of the manifested creation in the following manner (I.4):

"We know Him with one hub, three divisions, sixteen ends, sixteen supports (spokes), six sets of eight each, whose one noose has innumerable forms, whose paths are distinguished as three and whose delusion arises out of two causes."

The symbolism is explained below:

One hub: *Iswara.*
Three Divisions: The three qualities, namely *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* (Vishnu, Brahma and Mahesa).
Sixteen Ends: The five gross elements (*mahabhutas*), the five sense organs (*jnanedriyas*), the five organs of action (*karmendriyas*) and the mind (*manas*).
Fifty supports: They are the five *viparyayas* (ignorance, infatuation, love, anger and fear), the 28 weaknesses , nine opposites of happiness (*tushti*) and eight opposites of perfection (*siddhis*).
Twenty counter-supports: They are the five sense organs, five organs of action and their objects.
Six sets of eight each: They are: 1. *Prakriti* with its eight principles of gross elements, mind, *buddhi* and ego-sense, 2. Eight types of minerals (*dhatus*) found in the body 3. Eight types of wealth or abundance (*aisvarya*), 4. Eight types of feelings or mental states (*bhava*) 5. The eight types of gods (*devas*) 6. Eight qualities of the self (*atma guna*).

The one noose with innumerable forms: It is the desire or *kama* which manifests itself in many forms and holds the beings in bondage.

The three paths: These are the three paths to salvation, namely, the path of knowledge (*jnanamarg*), the path of devotion (*bhaktimarg*) and the path of action (*karmamarg*).

called Brahma who as the creative and dynamic principle uses the forms existing in Him and brings forth the beings.

The word *brah* means "bursting out or bringing forth" and *aham* means 'ego'. Brahma is therefore He who brings forth many *ahms* or egos or beings into this world, using his divine power and matter and pouring life (breath) into them. *Hiranyagarbha* is not an eternal being, but comes into existence at the beginning of creation and becomes dissolved in *Iswara* at the end of creation.

4. *Viraj*

Viraj is the manifest world, that which is created, or which is brought forth. He is the result of the creative process set in motion by *Iswara* and accomplished by *Hiranyagarbha*. He is the manifested aspect of *Iswara* through the hands of the latter.

Viraj is a world that is in perpetual motion and subject to illusion. It is a reality that is different and distinct in nature from that of *Iswara* or *Hiranyagarbha* since the interplay of the *gunas*, the elements and the senses result in the formation of numerous individual beings and ego forms (*ahamkaras*) who suffer from the illusion of individuality and feelings of separateness. *Viraj* like *Hiranyagarbha* is also subject to dissolution at the end of creation.

The Qualities of Shakti (Divine Power)

The *Svetavatara Upanishad* describes the qualities of the manifest creation inhabited by the divine power of God (*devatma-shakti*). Unlike the *prakriti* of the Samkhya school, the Shakti that is described here is not independent of Brahman but an aspect of Him. The

Upanishad describes the qualities of the manifested creation in the following manner (I.4):

"We know Him with one hub, three divisions, sixteen ends, sixteen supports (spokes), six sets of eight each, whose one noose has innumerable forms, whose paths are distinguished as three and whose delusion arises out of two causes."

The symbolism is explained below:

One hub: *Iswara.*
Three Divisions: The three qualities, namely *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (Vishnu, Brahma and Mahesa).
Sixteen Ends: The five gross elements (*mahabhutas*), the five sense organs (*jnanedriyas*), the five organs of action (*karmendriyas*) and the mind (*manas*).
Fifty supports: They are the five *viparyayas* (ignorance, infatuation, love, anger and fear), the 28 weaknesses , nine opposites of happiness (*tushti*) and eight opposites of perfection (*siddhis*).
Twenty counter-supports: They are the five sense organs, five organs of action and their objects.
Six sets of eight each: They are: 1. *Prakriti* with its eight principles of gross elements, mind, *buddhi* and ego-sense, 2. Eight types of minerals (*dhatus*) found in the body 3. Eight types of wealth or abundance (*aisvarya*), 4. Eight types of feelings or mental states (*bhava*) 5. The eight types of gods (*devas*) 6. Eight qualities of the self (*atma guna*).

The one noose with innumerable forms: It is the desire or *kama* which manifests itself in many forms and holds the beings in bondage.

The three paths: These are the three paths to salvation, namely, the path of knowledge (*jnanamarg*), the path of devotion (*bhaktimarg*) and the path of action (*karmamarg*).

The two causes of delusion: They are the good actions and bad actions performed with desire which lead to delusion.

The subsequent verse speaks of Brahman as a river of five streams flowing from five terrifying and crooked sources, whose vital breaths are five, who is at the root of the five perceptions, five whirlpools, five pains that are divided into five branches of fifty each. The five streams are perceptions flowing from the five sensory organs, the five vital breaths are the five types of *prana* that flows in the body, the five whirlpools are the five types of mental afflictions caused due to ignorance, desire, etc.

Brahman and Self-Realization

Who is this mysterious Brahman? Who is this Being whom we call God, who is described so beautifully in the *Upanishads* and extolled for centuries by seers and sages in the sacred land of the *Vedas*? Who is He to attain whom people renounce everything, prepare themselves for hardships, risk everything and pursue Him day and night?

In His thought, thought disappears. In His pursuit, all pursuit comes to an end. Seeking Him, one leaves behind all seeking. Who is this Great Being, whom even gods find difficult to explain? Beyond darkness and light, beyond all diversity and visibility, beyond all qualities and quarters, beyond all activities and forms, beyond all imagination and vision, beyond the silence of all silences, beyond life and death, is Brahman, whom none can explain in human language to our complete satisfaction.

When you find Him, you do not find yourself. When you are with Him, you are without Him. When you see

Him, you do not see anything else. Your knowledge does not help you to reach there, neither your wealth nor your thoughts. The entrance to the world of Brahman is right in front of you, but the veil of ignorance between Him and you.

Occasionally one may get a glimpse of Him like Indra, Vayu and Agni had; like lightning, that is how He is envisioned by the students of the *Kena Upanishad*. But none can really know Him with their limited consciousness. How can a part know the whole unless it becomes the whole? When the part becomes the whole does it not cease to be a part? This is the problem of knowing Brahman.

Who then is Brahman?

Brahman, is the very self, the 'I' that is present everywhere, in everything and around everything. There is no dichotomy in Brahman. Brahman is one Supreme endless unitary feeling of 'I'. In Brahman, 'you' are lost because 'you' are not there. You cannot explain your experience to others, because in reality, there is no experience. All is one endless, vast, immeasurable self, in which at the highest level there is one without the other. There is consciousness without distinction. There is no feeling of separation. Everything is self, that is 'I'. There is no 'me' or 'mine' either, because egoism and possessiveness are part of the separated consciousness.

We possess things because we cannot be the things. We seek things because we cannot escape from the physical feeling of space and duality. We look elsewhere for gratification because we have this incompleteness in us which seeks fulfilment. In Brahman, there is no object and subject, there is no experience and the experiencer, no knower and the known.

Everything is one endless indistinguishable 'I' ness. Brahman is 'I am' and 'I am' is the eternal reality. 'I am', is the non possessive, non egoistic and the non dualistic It is the truth, the whole truth, the purpose and the goal of all life that seeks and extinguishes itself in seeking. Brahman is 'I am He Who I am'. Brahman is 'I' (*aham*) and *aham* is Brahman.

Experience of this awareness is what we call self-realization. When we realize that there is nothing else in this vast universe, except the eternal self, we reach the end of our journey. The journey begins when we are separated from the self and ends when we becomes one with it.

All craving, competition, striving, envy, and comparison arise because of the absence of this awareness. When a seeker realizes that he is everything, with whom will he compete and for what end will he strive? True renunciation comes out of this experience and awareness. Without it, renunciation itself becomes a striving and in that striving is the shadow of separation, egoism, effort and comparison, the fear of failure and the desire for the fruit.

Negation of Self

Some people ask, "Where is God and if he is there actually, why does He not appear to us?" Some go to a sacred place, a temple or church and bring out their best behavior. They act piously and think religiously till the time they are in that sacred presence. But when they come out, we see them becoming their usual selves and indulging in their old routine acts of selfishness and self promotion. A few minutes of prayer, a little attention to God, may be better in a way compared to no religious activity. But if any one believes that it is going to bring him or her face to face with God, he or she is badly mistaken.

Even a student of first standard has to do his little bit of homework, learn some basics to gain the approval of his teachers and enter the next standard. If this is so, how can anyone expect to succeed in spiritual endeavour without corresponding effort? He who believes that it is not so, may visit a temple or church his entire life, but may not experience the true vision of God.

There are powerful orators who appear on TV screens or in front of some special audience and speak about God with such force and vehemence that sometimes we wonder whether they are in the midst of some election campaign or working in the marketing department of some divine corporation! One hardly finds any peace in their manner, in their words, in their demeanor and their behaviour. They are the unrefined souls, full of personal ambition, trying to provide some divine fantasy to gullible people.

God is not to be found in our thoughts, nor in our mundane actions. He is not to be found exclusively in any books or in someone's sacred speech. No church, no temple, no mosque can house God except symbolically or representatively.

He is beyond books, beyond thoughts, beyond words, and beyond all emotions. When your senses are quiet, when your mind is at peace, resting and relaxing, when your thoughts are asleep in the lap of silence, and when your emotions have retreated into some quite corner, you will find Him in the silence of your heart and in the oneness of your being.

You will find Him when you have disciplined yourself, when you have gained control over yourself, when you are in a position to deal with your desires and set them aside without upsetting your inner balance. You will see Him when you leave behind that ambition which has made you so competitive and at times insensitive. You will discern His footprints on the path of your life, when you shun all your desire-driven egoistic activity that has rendered you selfish and envious. You will see Him when you are able to love unconditionally those few who come into contact with you directly and undermine you and all that you stand for in every possible way.

If you can look at yourself without any expectation, if you can look at your future without any anxiety, if you can empty your mind of all that belongs to you and represents you, if you can act and live as if you do not exist except as a mere concept or idea, if you can strip yourself of all your possessions at least mentally and sincerely, if you are willing to let go of every thing at the slightest hint from God, you will perhaps find Him looking at the world through your eyes and communicating with the world through your words. It is when you close the door on yourself, that you find the other door opening, the door that leads to pure Light and utter delight, the door through which divine force enters and takes care of your life. You become an empty shell, devoid of all egoism but full of divine self.

Practical Hints

For just one day one should try this: Stop living and thinking for yourself. Stop putting yourself in front of everyone and everything. Stop behaving as if the world should and must exist for you, for your happiness and comfort. Accept the notion that it does not matter whether you are a part of this great world or not.

Stop declaring your thoughts, expressing your dear opinions in order to impress others. Instead listen to others with enormous patience, without feeling the compulsion of speaking in reply to prove a point or project your knowledge.

Set aside all impression management. It does not matter whether anyone really likes you or not. It does not matter whether you should become acceptable to the world outside or not. Forget about self-presentation and self-advancement. Do not react. Do not put forth any suggestions or view points.

Live as if it does not matter whether any one should really care about you, think about you or feel concerned about you. Do not draw any attention to yourself by such acts that place you prominently in any group. Do not make yourself important in any way. Do not give your opinions unless you are asked.

Do not defend yourself verbally unless there is something very serious at stake. Do not worry about what is going to happen. Do not plan anything in particular. Let things happen rather than you forcing them to happen. Do not strive. Do not struggle. Cultivate the silence of the heart and keep praying.

And if you can do this sincerely for some days, you will realize that you have just crossed the first hurdle, the transformation of your outer self. This is only the first stage in that long journey that leads you finally to the world of God.

Chapter Fifteen

History of Yoga— The *Upanishads*

The word *Upanishad* literally means 'to sit near', and this invokes the image of devotees or aspirants sitting at the feet of a master. Whether that master is a *yogi*, a Zen master or a Christian mystic, the transmitted teachings can be called an *Upanishad*. In fact, Juan Mascaro comments that the Sermon on the Mount, with the disciples at the feet of Jesus, can be considered an *Upanishad*.

The *Upanishads* which concern us in this context are of course the writings that sealed the close of the Vedic period, a great collection of spiritual texts which are the distillation of hundreds of years of oral teachings, which, until their committal to writing, were the secret preserve of the initiated.

The *Upanishads* contain the highest wisdom, revealed to illumined sages in the depth of meditation. As such, one should not describe them as philosophy as we understand it. The *Upanishads* emphasize the importance of meditation and other yoga practices, so that their wisdom becomes clear as our hearts and minds become less opaque; we then realise for ourselves a wisdom that we feel in the marrow of our bones, and which remains constant and unshaken by the dry polemic of philosophical argument.

The *Chandogya Upanishad* states that meditation is higher than thought. The *Upanishads* were written at different times, over a time span of at least a thousand years; however, they are very much associated with the period around the fifth and sixth century before the birth of Christ.

Bede Griffiths describes this as the axial period in human history, a key period of spiritual discovery, which saw the birth of the Buddha, the composition of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the formulation by Greek philosophers of the concept of the Logos, and the revelations of the Hebrew prophets. It was a period when the eternal plunged into the temporal, and, according to Bede Griffiths, "Practically all religions today stem from this great experience".

One hundred and eight *Upanishads* have been preserved, like beads in a cosmic *mala*; of these, ten are of particular importance, and have come to be known as the principal *Upanishads*. They are the quintessence of the mysterious Sramanic stream, incorporated into the Hindu religion, and appended to the end of the *Vedas* as *Vedanta*.

However, they are the spiritual inheritance of every age and universal in their message. Each *Upanishad* contains priceless wisdom, and are the very pith of yoga, indispensable to anyone who would tread that path or aspire to teach it. If you seek to know the nature of *prana*, go to the *Prashna Upanishad*; or if you seek to learn of the supreme spirit, go to the *Kena Upanishad*. If you wish to learn the doctrine of the sacred mantra *Aum*, seek out the *Mandukya Upanishad*. And there is the *Chandogya Upanishad*, where the young Brahmin, filled with learning, is taught that knowledge whereby what is not thought is thought, at the breaking of the seed of the banyan tree.

Peering into its essence and seeing nothing, he is told by his father, "Believe me, my son, an invisible and subtle essence is the spirit of the whole universe. That is reality, that is *atman*. Thou art that".

The *Upanishads* are rendered in beautiful poetry, and wisdom is taught by sages, by the elements, by birds and animals, by father to son, and sage to king. We enter the timeless world of the 'forest academies' where seekers sought out *bramha-vidya*, the 'science of the Supreme'. Eknath Easwaran describes them as ecstatic snapshots of supreme reality, and adds that unlike other great scriptures that look outward in reverence and awe, "the *Upanishads* look inward, finding the powers of nature only an expression of the more awe-inspiring powers of human consciousness."

Chapter Sixteen

The Moment of Death

> *When his body grows weak and he becomes apparently unconscious, the dying man gathers his senses about him, completely withdraws their powers and descends into the heart.*
>
> *Radhakrishnan.*

When self gets confused, the breaths gather round him. He takes to himself those particles of light and descends into the heart. When the person in the eye turns away, then he becomes non-knowing of forms.

He one, he does not see, they say; he becomes one, he does not smell, they say; he is becomes one, he does not taste, they say, he is becomes one, he does not speak, they say; he is becomes one, he does not hear, they say; he is becomes one, he does not think, they say; he is becomes one, he does not touch, they say; he is becomes one, he does not know, they say. The point of his heart becomes lighted up and by that light the self departs either through the eye or through the head or through other apertures of the body. And when he departs, life departs after him. And when life thus departs, all the vital breaths depart after him. He becomes one with intelligence. His knowledge and his work take hold of him as also his past experience. (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, IV, 4, 1-2.)

Verily, when a person departs from this world, he goes to the air. It opens out there for him like the hole of a chariot wheel. Through that he goes upwards. He goes to the sun. It opens out there for him like the hole of a *lambara*. Through that he goes upwards. He reaches the moon. It opens out there for him like the hole of a drum. Through that he goes upwards. He goes to the world free from grief, free from snow. There he dwells eternally. (*ibid.*, V, II, I.)

Chapter Seventeen

Atman—The Eternal Soul

Atman is the immortal aspect of the mortal existence, which is hidden in every object of creation including man. It is the microcosm, representing the macrocosm in each of us, imparting to us divine qualities and possibilities and providing us with the reason to exist and experience the pains and pleasures of earthly life.

It is Brahman, the very self which descends into the elements of nature through self-projection and participates in the game of self-induced illusion and pure delight. But bound by the senses and limited by sensory knowledge and sensory perceptions, we do not perceive the truth. The self-existent Lord pierced the senses to make them turn outward. Thus, we look to the external world and do see not the self with in us."

The Self is thus the silent partner in all our deeds and experiences, the observer and the dweller of all embodied beings. Its nature cannot be explained or described in human language adequately, as it is beyond the senses and the mind. There the eyes cannot travel, nor the speech nor the mind. Nor do we know how to explain it to the disciples. It is other than the known and beyond the unknown.

It can only be experienced when all the sensory activities cease to impact the mind and when the mind itself is freed from the movement of thoughts and sense objects and the torment of desires, which are the prime cause of all human activities and sufferings. The experience comes when the mind and the five senses are stilled and when the intellect is stilled. They say that yoga is complete stillness in which one enters the state of oneness.

Although the soul is described as the flame of the size of thumb which is said to exist between the eyebrows physically, or in the heart of all emotionally, its exact location is uncertain. It has no physical or mental dimensions as such, other than as a mere reflection or an idea in the mind. But unquestionably, He exists and He alone is real. All else is false and wither away, crushed by the weight of sins and pressures of time.

We are told, that the adorable one is seated in the heart and rules the breath of life. All the senses pay homage to Him. When He breaks out of the body in freedom from the bonds of flesh, what else remains? This self is supreme. Above the senses is the mind, above the mind the intellect, above that is the ego and above the ego is the unmanifest cause. And beyond is Brahman, omnipresent and without attributes.

The ego is *atman's* poor cousin, the false centre, which assumes the position of control and ownership, whereas in actual reality, it is a mere reflection, a product of illusion and a mental projection, born out of sensory experiences and the accumulation of memories and thoughts. While the basis of *atman* is reality, permanence and bliss, the nature of ego is illusion, impermanence and suffering.

The ego of a living being is permanently situated in ignorance and gloom and needs to be rescued from eternal doom and damnation by the indwelling *atman*. The ego is a false reflection of it. The *Katha Upanishad* explains the relative status of the two selves in this manner, "There are two selves, the separate ego and the indivisible *atman*. When one raises above I, me and mine, the *atman* reveals itself as the real self."

The *Mundaka Upanishad* is more explicit and poetic, "Like two birds perched on the same tree, intimate friends, the ego and the self, dwell in the same body. The former eats the sweet and sour fruits of life, while the latter looks on with detachment."

This symbolism is further expanded in this verse of the *Katha Upanishad*, "Know the self as the lord of chariot, the body as the chariot itself, the *buddhi* as the charioteer and the mind as reins. The senses are said to be the horses and selfish desires as the roads they (the senses) travel. When the self is confused with the body, mind and senses, they say that he appears to enjoy pleasures and suffer sorrow."

Although *atman* is located in all of us, we cannot know it or understand it adequately with our ordinary awareness. There no eyes can penetrate, no voice, no mind, nor do we know how to understand it or preach it." In the *Kena Upanishad*, the teacher explains the difficulty to the students in the following words, "If you think that you know the self you know not." And the student admits, "I do not think I know the self, nor can I say I know him not."

And in the *Katha Upanishad*, Yamaraja, the god of death explains to Nachiketa, "The self cannot be known through the study of scriptures, nor through intellect nor through hearing learned discourses. It can be attained only by those whom the self chooses."

He reemphasizes the same point again elsewhere. The problem is further explained and the way to reach *atman* is also suggested to the students in the *Kena Upanishad*, "The ignorant thinks that the self can be known by the intellect, but the enlightened one knows that he is beyond the duality of the knower and the known."

The idea is that *atman* cannot be realized by the ordinary consciousness, where the senses are active and where there is the interference of the mind in the process of awareness. There cannot be an experience of *atman* where there is this gulf of 'knowing' between the knower and the known. He who knows it, knows it not really.

It is the mind and the senses which stand between the two poles of reality, the knower and the known, and prevent the ordinary consciousness from realizing the true nature of *atman*. The mind is thus an imperfect instrument with an inherent inability to understand and realize ***atman***. The truth of self cannot come from him who has not realized that he is the self. The intellect cannot reveal the self beyond its duality of subject and object.

But how does one realize the *atman*? What is the process? The self cannot be known by he who does not desist himself from unrighteous ways, does not control his senses, nor stills his mind and does not practise meditation," explains Yamaraja to Nachiketa and also adds, "This awakening you have known comes not through logic and scholarship, but from close association with a realized teacher."

But mere association with a teacher may not again be helpful, unless there is an inner and deep commitment to know the truth. The self cannot be known through the study of the scriptures, nor through intellect, nor through learned discourses. The self can be attained by only those whom the self chooses. Verily to them does the self reveals itself.

The connection between the outer and the inner worlds is not direct and straight. There are many intermittent stages to pass through and conditions to achieve and obstacles to overcome before reaching the final goal. In *Mandukya Upanishad,* we are told that the self is four-fold:

1. The wakeful Vaishvanara, the Universal Male (the ego),
2. The dreaming *Taijasa,* the enjoyer of subtle objects and the lord of the luminous mind, (the astral),
3. The mysterious *Pragna,* the deep sleeper and the lord of wisdom and
4. *Atman* the eternal, the incommunicable, the end of phenomena, Brahman Himself.

Perhaps this may not be the entire truth for so mysterious is the inward journey and so inadequately equipped is the human mind to record the experiences of the spirit that there may be deeper and other planes of consciousness between the wakeful state and the *atman,* about whom we have yet to gain knowledge.

But what about the ultimate experience? What happens when one reaches there? No one seems to explain that experience accurately and to our complete satisfaction. It is beyond human language, for our words do not carry the intensity and luminosity of that transcendent experience.

At the same time, the delight of the experience cannot be contained in the secret caves of the heart, as it gushes forth with the thundering sounds of pure joy into the open. Thus, for the benefit of posterity and the ordinary, the experiences show themselves in some feeble analogies and vague symbolism.

In the *Isa Upanishad,* we come across one such instance. The seeker first prays to Brahman, "The face of truth is hidden behind your golden lid, O Sun. May you remove the lid so that I may see the golden Truth !" And when the request is granted and the splendor manifests itself in him he, submerged in pure bliss, lets out these words, "In truth I am Him."

Perhaps that is the ultimate truth a person can discover in his or her spiritual journey, the truth that remains hidden behind the golden lid eager to show its resplendent golden face while we struggle and strive in the mortal world with vague yearnings and uncertain future.

Glossary

Acharya	Religious teacher.
Adhvaryu priest	One of the priests officiating at a sacrifice, his duty being to measure the ground, building the altar; preparing the sacrificial vessels, etc. While he is engaged in these duties, hymns from the *Yajur Veda* are recited.
Adityas	Twelve deities constituting a group.
Advaita	Non-duality; also the name of a school of the *Vedanta* philosophy teaching the oneness of God, soul and universe, whose chief exponents were Gaudapada and Sankaracharya.
Agamas	The *Vedas*.
Agni	Fire; the god of fire.
Agnihotra	A Vedic sacrifice in which oblations were offered to Agni, the god of fire.
Akasa	The first of the five material elements that constitute the universe; often translated as 'space' and 'ether'. The four other elements are *vayu* (air),

	agni (fire), *ap* (water) and *prithivi* (earth).
Anandagiri	A well-known Sanskrit scholar who wrote commentaries chiefly on Sankaracharya's explanations of the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagvad Gita*.
Anandam	Bliss.
Antahkarana	The inner organ; the mind.
Apana	A modification of the vital breath, by the action of which the unassimilated food and drink go downward and are ultimately ejected; also the movement of the out-going breath. See *prana*.
Aranyaka	One of the sections of the *Vedas*.
Arjuna	A hero of the epic *Mahabharata* and a friend and disciple of Krishna.
Aryaman	The sun god.
Ashrama	Hermitage; also any one of the four stages of life: the celibate student stage (*brahmacharya*), the married householder stage (*grahasthya*), the stage of retirement and contemplation (*vanaprastha*) and the stage of religious mendicancy (*sanyasa*).
Asvamedha	The horse-sacrifice, performed in ancient India by kings and emperors to demonstrate their sovereignty over other princes.

Asvattha	The holy fig tree; sometimes used as a symbol of the universe.
Asvins	The twin sons of the sun god and physicians of the gods in heaven.
Atharva Veda	One of the four *Vedas*. See *Vedas*.
Atman	The self or soul; denotes both the supreme soul and the individual soul, which, according to non-dualistic *Vedanta*, are ultimately identical.
Aum	The same as *OM*.
Avidya	A term of the *Vedanta* philosophy denoting ignorance, individual or cosmic.
Badarayana	The author of the *Brahma Sutras* and other philosophical works; also known as Vyasa.
Bhagavad Gita	An important Hindu scripture, comprising eighteen chapters of the section on Bhishma in the epic *Mahabharata* embodying the teachings of Sri Krishna.
Bhagvan	One endowed with the six attributes, namely, infinite prosperity, strength, glory, splendour, knowledge and renunciation. An epithet of the Godhead; also the personal god of the devotee.
Bhagvata	A well-known scripture dealing mostly with the life of Sri Krishna.

Bhakti	Love of God.
Bhuh	Earth.
Bhuvah	The space between earth and heaven; the atmosphere.
Brahma	The Creator God; the first person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Vishnu and Siva.
Brahma priest	The chief among the four priests who conduct a sacrifice.
Brahma Sutras	An authoritative treatise on the *Vedanta* philosophy, ascribed to Vyasa.
Brahmacharin	A celibate student who lives with his teacher and devotes himself to the practice of spiritual discipline.
Brahmacharya	The first of the four stages of life; the life of an unmarried student.
Brahma loka	The plane of Brahma, roughly corresponding to the highest heaven of the dualistic religions, where fortunate souls go after death and enjoy communion with the personal god.
Brahman	The Absolute; the Supreme Reality of non-dualistic *Vedanta*.
Brahmana	One of the two main sections of the *Vedas*, which includes the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*.
Brahmarandhra	The aperture at the top of the head through which the soul of an illumined person leaves the body at death.

Brahmavidya	The knowledge of Brahman.
Brahmin	A member of the priestly caste, the highest caste in Hindu society.
Brihaspati	The preceptor and priest of the gods.
Buddhi	The determinative faculty of the mind, which makes decisions; sometimes translated as "intellect".
Chandra loka	The plane of the Moon, where souls repair after death to enjoy the fruit of their meritorious deeds done with a selfish motive. Afterwards, these souls are reborn on earth.
Chit	Consciousness.
Cycle	A world period, representing the duration of the universe between its manifestation and its return to the unmanifested state.
Deva loka	The plane of the deities.
Devas	The gods of Hindu mythology.
Dharma	Righteousness, duty; the inner constitution of a thing, which governs its growth.
Dvija	An epithet applied to members of the three upper castes after their investiture with the sacred thread, which is their second, or spiritual birth. The first birth is

	the physical birth from their mother's womb.
Doctrine of the Five Fires	See *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*
Gandharva	A member of a class of demigods in Hindu mythology, who are the musicians of the gods.
Gayatri	A sacred verse of the *Vedas,* recited daily by Hindus of the three upper castes after their investiture with the sacred thread.
Gayatri Mantra	A sacred verse of the *Vedas,* recited daily by Hindus of the three upper castes after their investiture with the sacred thread.
Gita	The same as *Bhagvad Gita.*
Guna	According to Samkhya philosophy, *prakriti* (nature or matter) consists of three *gunas*—usually translated as 'qualities'—known as *sattva, rajas* and *tamas. Tamas* stands for dullness or inertia; *rajas,* for restlessness or activity; *sattva,* for balance or righteousness. They are the three strands forming the twisted rope of nature, by which a man is bound to the relative world.
Guru	Spiritual teacher.

Harih	An epithet of the Godhead.
Hiranyagarbha	The Golden Egg, the first manifestation of Saguna Brahman in the relative universe.
Homa	Sacrifice.
Horse-sacrifice	See *Asvamedha*.
Hotri Priest	A priest conducting a sacrifice, especially one who recites the prayers of the *Rig Veda* at the sacrifice.
Ikshvaku	The first king of the Solar Dynasty, mentioned in the *Puranas*.
Indra	The king of the gods.
Isvara	The personal god. See *Saguna Brahman*.
Jagat	The relative universe.
Jainas	The followers of Jainism, an important religious sect of India.
Jamuna	A sacred river of India.
Janaka	One of the ideal kings in Hindu mythology, who combined *yoga* with enjoyment of the world.
Jeeva	Living being. The individual soul, which in essence is one with the universal soul.
Jeevanmukta	One enjoying liberation while living in the body. See *Jnana*.
Jnana	Knowledge of Reality arrived at through reasoning and discrimination; also (with small

	the process of reasoning by means of which ultimate truth is attained.
Jnana kanda	The part of the *Vedas* that teaches philosophical wisdom.
Kanada	A sage who was the founder of the Vaiseshika philosophy.
Kapila	The well-known founder of the Samkhya philosophy.
Karma	Action in general; duty. The *Vedas* use this word chiefly to denote ritualistic worship and humanitarian action.
Karmakanda	The part of the *Vedas* that deals with rituals and sacrifices.
Kshattriya	A member of the second or warrior caste in Hindu society.
Kusa Grass	A kind of grass from which mats for meditation are made; also used in the sacrifice.
Madhva	Madhvacharya.
Madhvacharya	The chief exponent of dualistic *Vedanta* (A.D. 1199–1296).
Mahabharata	The celebrated Hindu epic containing the *Bhagvad Gita*.
Mahah	The fourth of the seven upper planes in the relative universe; it is an intermediary region between the three planes constituting *Brahma loka* and the three planes known as *Bhuh*, *Bhuvah* and *Svah*.

Mahesvara	The Great Lord the lord of all the *Iswaras*, or governors, of the innumerable Brahmandas, or world systems; an epithet of Saguna Brahman.
Manas	The faculty of doubt and volition; sometimes translated as 'mind'.
Mantra	Holy Sanskrit text; also one of the two main sections of the *Vedas*, which describes the hymns during a sacrifice.
Manu	The celebrated lawgiver of ancient India; also the name of the mythical personage regarded as the representative man and father of the human race.
Maruts	The winds.
Maya	A term of the *Vedanta* philosophy denoting ignorance obscuring the vision of reality; the cosmic illusion on account of which the One appears as many, the absolute as the relative world.
Meru	A mythical mountain abounding in gold and precious stones. The abode of Brahma, the Creator and a meeting-place for the gods, demigods, rishis and other supernatural beings, Meru is regarded as the axis around which the planets revolve.

Mimamsa	Same as Purva-mimamsa.
Mimamsakas	The followers of the Purva-mimamsa philosophy, a system based upon the ritualistic portion of the *Vedas*, whose chief exponent was Jaimini.
Mitra	The sun.
Naiyayikas	The followers of Nyaya philosophy.
Nirguna Brahman	Brahman without attributes. A term in *Vedanta* used to describe the Absolute.
Nirvana	Final absorption in Brahman, or all-pervading reality, through the annihilation of the individual ego.
Nitya Karma	Daily obligatory work, such as worship of God, by the performance of which sins accumulated in past lives are gradually destroyed and the propensity to new sins is checked.
Non-Dualism	A school of the Vedanta philosophy teaching the oneness of God, soul and universe. See *Advaita*.
Northern Path	The Devayina, or Way of the Gods, by which departing souls attain to *Brahmaloka*.
Nyaya	Indian logic; founded by Gautama, it is one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy.

Om	The most sacred word of the *Vedas*; also written *Aum*. It is a symbol both of the personal god and of the Absolute.
Panchadasi	An authoritative Vedantic treatise.
Paramahamsa	One belonging to the highest order of *sannyasins*, or monks.
Patanjali	The author of the Yoga system, one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, which deals with concentration and its methods, control of the mind, *samadhi* and similar matters.
Pitris	Forefathers.
Pitriyana	The southern path, or way of the manes, by which departing souls attain *Chandra loka*, or the plane of the Moon.
Pitra Rina	Parent's debt.
Plane of the Moon	*Chandraloka*, a plane where departed souls enjoy the fruit of their meritorious action performed while on earth and from which they return to earth for rebirth to satisfy their unfulfilled desires.
Prajapati	The Creator God.
Prajna	Consciousness functioning in *deep sleep*.
Prajnatman	The conscious self.

Prakriti	Primordial nature; the material substratum of the creation, consisting of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas*.
Prana	The vital breath which sustains life in a physical body; the primal energy or force, of which other forces are manifestations. In the books of Yoga, the *prana* is described as having five modifications, according to its five bodily functions: *prana* (which controls the breath), *apana* (which carries down unassimilated food and drink), *vyana* (which pervades the entire body), *udana* (by which the contents of the stomach are ejected through the mouth and the soul, at death, is conducted from the body) and *samana* (which carries nutrition throughout the body). *Prana* is also a name of Saguna Brahman, or Brahman with attributes.
Pranayama	Control of the breath; one of the disciplines of Yoga.
Prarabdha Karma	That portion of the work performed in a previous life which fruit in the present life.

Pratika	Something worshipped as a substitute for God.
Puranas	Books of Hindu mythology.
Purusha	A term of Samkhya philosophy denoting spirit, or the conscious principle. The universe evolves from the union of *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha*. In *Vedanta,* the word also denotes the soul and the Absolute.
Purva-Mimamsa	A system of orthodox Hindu philosophy whose chief exponent was Jaimini; it is based upon the ritualistic part of the *Vedas*.
Pushan	The nourisher; also an epithet of the sun.
Qualified Non-dualism	A school of the *Vedanta* founded by Ramanuja, according to which the soul and nature are modes of Brahman and the individual soul is a part of Brahman.
Rajas	The principle of restlessness or activity in nature. See *guna*.
Raja-Yoga	A system of Yoga ascribed to Patanjali, dealing with concentration and its methods, control of the mind, *samadhi* and similar matters.
Rakshasas	Members of a class of demigods; monsters.

Ramakrishna	A great saint of Bengal regarded as a divine incarnation (A.D. 1836–1886).
Ramanuja	Ramanujacharya.
Ramanujacharya	A great saint of southern India, the founder of the school of Qualified non-dualistic *Vedanta* (A.D. 1017–1137).
Rechaka	Exhalation of the breath.
Rig	A verse of the *Rig Veda*.
Rig Veda	One of the four *Vedas*. See *Vedas*.
Rik	Same as Rig.
Rishi	A seer of truth to whom the wisdom of the *Vedas* was revealed; a general name for saint or ascetic.
Rudras	Members of a group of gods, eleven in number, supposed to be collateral manifestations of Siva, who is their leader.
Sachchidananda	Existence, knowledge, bliss and the Absolute a name of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.
Sadhyas	Members of a class of celestial beings.
Saguna Brahman	Brahman which attributes the Absolute conceived as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe. Corresponds to *Iswara*, or the personal god.
Saivas	The worshippers of Siva.

Sakti	Power, generally the creative Power of Brahman; a name of the Divine Mother in Hindu religion.
Salagrama	A stone emblem of Vishnu, the Supreme Lord.
Samadhi	Ecstasy, trance, communion with God.
Saman	The *Sama Veda*. See *Vedas*.
Samana	A modification of the vital breath, by the action of which nutrition is carried all through the body. See *prana*.
Sama Veda	One of the four *Vedas*. See *Vedas*.
Samhita	A section of the *Vedas* containing the collection of hymns chanted during a sacrifice; the same as *mantra*.
Samkhya	One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, which teaches that the universe evolves as result of the union of *prakriti* (nature) and *purusha* (consciousness). According to this system, which is attributed to Kapila, there are as many *purushas*, or units of consciousness, as there are living beings.
Samkhyas	Followers of the *Samkhya* philosophy.
Samsara	The relative world; the unceasing cycle of birth and death.
Sankara	Sankaracharya.

Sankaracharya	One of the greatest saints and philosophers of India, the foremost exponent of *Advaita Vedanta* (A.D. 788–820).
Sannyasa	The monastic life.
Sannyasi	A Hindu monk, who renounces the world in order to realize God.
Sarasvati	The Goddess of learning and music.
Sat	Reality, Existence.
Sattva	The principle of balance or righteousness. See *guna*.
Satyaloka	The highest world in the universe; the abode of Brahma.
Sayanacharya	A celebrated commentator on the *Vedas*.
Siva	The Destroyer God; the third person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma and Vishnu.
Smriti	The sacred books of the Hindus, subsidiary to the *Vedas*, guiding their daily life and conduct; they include the epics, the *Puranas* and the *Code of Manu*.
Soma	A creeper the juice of which was used in Vedic sacrifices; also an epithet of the moon.
Soma-Juice	The juice of a creeper, used in Vedic sacrifices.
Southern Path	Same as *Pitriyana*.
Sri	The word is often used as an honorific prefix to the names of

	deities and eminent persons, or to celebrated works generally of a sacred character.
Sruti	Hearing; the *Vedas*, which in ancient India were transmitted orally from teacher to disciple.
Sudra	A member of the fourth or labouring caste in Hindu society.
Sushumna	Among the innumerable nerves of the nervous system, the *sushumna* is the most important. It is situated within the spinal column and extends from the base of the spine to the brain. The *sushumna*, through which the awakened spiritual energy rises, is described as the *Brahmavartman*, or Pathway to Brahman.
Sutra	Thread; an epithet of the cosmic soul conceived as the thread that holds together all creatures and the universe; the same as *hiranyagarbha, prana* and *vayu*. The word also denotes an aphoristic statement.
Sutratma	The Thread Soul, an epithet of the Cosmic Soul conceived of as the thread that holds together all creatures and the universe; same as *Hiranyagarbha, Prana* and *Vayu*.
Suvah	Same as *Svah*.
Svah	Heaven.

Svaha	A word used when an oblation is offered to the god of fire in sacrifice.
Taijasa	Consciousness functioning in the dream state.
Tamas	The principle of dullness or inertia in nature. See *guna*.
Tantra	A system of religious philosophy in which the Divine Mother, or Power, is regarded as Ultimate Reality; also the scriptures dealing with this philosophy.
Turiya	The fourth; pure consciousness, which both transcends and pervades the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.
Udana	A modification of the vital breath, by the action of which the contents of the stomach are ejected through the mouth and the soul is conducted from the body at death. See *Prana*.
Udgatri	One of the officiating priests in a Vedic sacrifice; his duty was to recite from the *Sama Veda*.
Udgatri Priest	One of the officiating priests in a Vedic sacrifice; his duty was to recite from the *Sama Veda*.
Udgitha	A part of the *Sama Veda* chanted at the sacrifice.
Uktha	The most important among the hymns of praise in the *Vedas*.

Upadhi	A term of the Vedanta philosophy denoting a limitation imposed upon the self or upon Brahman through ignorance.
Upanishads	The well-known scriptures of the Hindus, containing the philosophy of the *Vedas*. They are one hundred and eight in number and of them eleven are called major *Upanishads*.
Upasana	A ritualistic worship with meditation.
Vaiseshika	One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, founded by Kanada.
Vaisvanara	Consciousness functioning through the collective gross body in the waking state.
Vaisya	A member of the commercial and agricultural caste in Hindu society.
Vanaprasthin	One who has entered the stage of retirement and contemplation.
Varuna	The presiding deity of the ocean in Hindu mythology.
Vasus	Members of a class of deities, usually eight in number.
Vayu	An epithet of the cosmic soul; the same as *Hiranyagarbha*, *Prana* and *Sutra*. The word also denotes the element air.

Vedanta	The essence or the concluding portion of the *Vedas*; a system of philosophy ascribed to Vyasa, discussed mainly in the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagvad Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras*.
Vedantasara	An authoritative treatise on *Vedanta*, ascribed to Sadananda.
Vedas	The revealed scriptures of the Hindus, consisting of the *Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*.
Vidya	Knowledge; the word also denotes Knowledge leading to Liberation, i.e. to the realization of ultimate reality.
Vina	A stringed musical instrument.
Viraj	An epithet of Saguna Brahman conceived as the aggregate of all physical bodies.
Virat	Consciousness limited or conditioned by the *upadhi* of the aggregate of gross bodies; an epithet of the cosmic soul.
Vishnu	The all-pervading Spirit; a name of the Supreme Lord; the Preserver God, the second person of the Hindu Trinity, the other two being Brahma and Siva.
Visishtadvaita	Qualified non-dualistic *Vedanta*, as expounded by Ramanuja.
Visva	Consciousness functioning through the waking state.

Visve-Devas	The name of a particular class of gods.
Vyahritis	Mystic words uttered in various rituals. There are in all seven *vyahritis*, which are the symbols of the seven planes, namely, *bhuh, bhuvah, suvah, mahah, jana, tapah* and *satya*. The first three of these, called the great *vyahritis*, are recited by every Brahmin during his daily devotions.
Vyana	A modification of the vital breath, by the action of which the vital energy pervades the entire body. See *prana*.
Vyasa	The compiler of the *Vedas* and the reputed author of the Vedanta philosophy.
Way of The Gods	See *Northern Path*.
Way of the Manes	See *Pitriyana*.
Yajna	Sacrifice, either in the form of an oblation offered to God or of an action performed with a spiritual motive.
Yajur Veda	One of the four *Vedas*. See *Vedas*.
Yajus	Same as *Yajur Veda*.
Yakshas	Members of a class of demigods.
Yamaraja	The king of death, a Vedic deity.
Yoga	Union of the individual soul and the supreme soul; also the

	discipline by which such union is effected. The Yoga system of philosophy, ascribed to Patanjali, is one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy and deals with the realization of truth through concentration of the mind.
Yogi	Male who practises *yoga*.
Yogin	Female who practises *yoga*.

List of 108 Upanishads

The exact number of the *Upanishads* is not clearly known. Scholars differ on coming to the conclusion about the total number of *Upanishads* as well as on what constitutes an *Upanishad*. Some of the *Upanishads* are very ancient, but some are of recent origin.

The original *Upanishads* are the end portions of the four *Vedas*, and thereby came to be identified with Vedanta, which literally means the end of the *Vedas*. They dealt with the philosophical aspects of the *Vedas* and were taught in ancient India to highly qualified and selected Individuals.

The *Upanishadic* texts are part of the Shruti literature and are considered to be divine in origin. They are associated with the names of several ancient seers. Some of these lived at least twenty generations before Lord Krishna and the probable date of the *Mahabharata*-war. Prominent among these sages were Yagnavalkya, Uddalaka Aruni, Shandilya, Aitareya, Pipplapada and Sanatkumara.

Today there are estimated to be about 350 *Upanishads*, some well known and some least known. The *Bhagvad Gita* of Lord Krishna is also considered to be an *Upanishad* because it contains the essence of many of the *Upanishads*. The following is a list of 108 *Upanishads* as per the list contained in the *Muktikopanishad*. They have being in four categories according to the particular *Veda* to which each of them belongs. The very important among these have been shown in *bold letters*. Those *Upanishads* for which there are English translations are shown prominently.

Rig Veda((10)
Altareya
Atmabodha
Kaushitaki
Mudgala
Nirvana
Nadabindu
Akshamaya
Tripura
Bahvruka
Saubhagyalakshmi
Yajurveda: (50)
Katha
Taittiriya
Isavasya
Brihadaranyaka
Akshi
Ekakshara
Garbha
Prnagnihotra
Svetasvatara
Sariraka
Sukarahasya
Skanda
Sarvasara
Adhyatma
Niralamba
Paingala
Mantrika
Muktika
Subala
Avadhuta
Katharudra
Yajurveda (Contd..)
Amrtabinclu
Kshurika
Tejobindu
Dhyanabindu
Brahmavidya
Yogakundalini
Yogatattva
Yogasikha
Varaha
Advayataraka
Trisikhibrahmana
Mandalabrahmana
Hamsa
Kalisantaraaa
Narayana
Tarasara
Kalagnirudra
Dakshinamurti
Pancabrahma
Rudrahrdaya
Sarasvati rahasya
Sama Veda: (16)
Kena
Chandogya
Mahat
Maltrayani
Valrasucl

Savitri
Aruneya
Kundika
Maitreyi
Samnyasa
Atharva Veda: (32)
Prashna
Mandukya
Mundaka
Atma
Surya
Narada-Parivrajakas
Parabrahma
Paramaharnsa-Parivrajakas
Pasupatha-Brahma
Mahavakya
Sandilya
Krishna
Garuda
Gopalatapani
Tripadavibhuti-mahnarayana
Dattatreya
Kalvalya
Narsimha Tapani
Ramatapani
Ramarahasya
Hayagriva
Atharvasikha
Atharvasira
Ganapati
Brhajjabala
Bhasmajabala
Sarabha
Annapurna
Tripuratapanl
Devi
Brahma
Jabala
Turiyatita
Paramahansa
Bhikshuka
Yajnavalkya
Satyayani
Amrtanada
Jabaladarsana
Yogacudaman
Avyakta
Vasudevai
Jabali
Rudrakshajabala
Bhavana
Sita

Every fourth child in today's world is stress prone. Each one of us suffer from the depression syndrome at one time or the other. The aim of the book, *An Introduction to the Upanishads* is to examine and understand how far and in what ways can its teachings help us to overcome this curse of the modern age related to our body and mind.

The book is a scientific examination of the ten principles of the *Upanishads* that discusses about the mystery of life and death. What is *jiva?* Who is *Ishwara?* What is *Jagat?* What is bondage? What is liberation? In fact, the whole philosophy of a healthy, happy and peaceful living is revealed in the *Upanishads.*

Perhaps never before in the history of civilization was the importance of the teachings of the *Upanishads* so vitally needed than today to reconstruct the religious, social, economic, political and cultural aspects of our life. Hence, an understanding of the *Upanishads* is important for a prosperous and peaceful world towards global peace and harmony.

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